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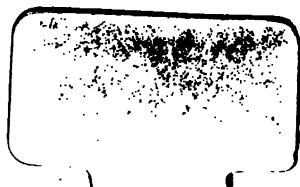
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STRUCTURE OF PROPHECY.

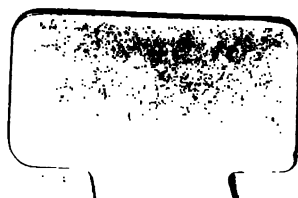
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THE
STRUCTURE OF PROPHECY.

BY
JAMES DOUGLAS OF CAVERS.

SECOND EDITION.

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N O T E.

THE following Treatise contains the substance of Five Lectures on Prophecy. The object was to give a rapid and general outline of the Structure of the Prophetic Writings.

The Author has only to add his fervent wish and prayer, that a writer might speedily be raised up to give the world a standard work on the whole of Prophecy, where the comment might be fully in accordance with the Divine text; and partaking of the permanence of the original, might endure to all generations.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN affixing a few remarks to the treatise "on the Structure of Prophecy," we would again renew our supplications to the Giver of all good, for that long wanted, and, we trust, much desired boon, a standard work upon Prophecy. How much do the Evidences of Christianity suffer from the absence of what would afford so strong a proof of the heavenly origin of our religion! And what uncertainty would be removed by the leading outlines of prophetic Revelation being strongly marked and determined! We have great need, in the present times, that the Prophetic Word, like a lamp shining in a dark place, should afford its uninterrupted light to our footsteps, ready to stumble upon the dark mountains, amidst gathering storms, tempestuous darkness, thunders breaking overhead, and torrents of calamity about on every side to surround us. The hearts of all are in the hand of God, "like the streams that water the garden, wheresoever He will He guideth them." May prayer arise from many, frequently and fervently, that the Holy Spirit that dictated Prophecy of old, may raise up a faithful interpreter.

From inadvertence, the name of Davison of Oriel was omitted, amongst those who have been of service to prophetic interpretation. Though his work does not embrace the whole of

Prophecy, it is rich in many excellent views. We have just seen the first part of a work by Mr. Fraser Tytler, on Prophecy, and can recognise in it the talents that are almost hereditary in his family. The subject is arduous and dangerous, and his work is only in the commencement; we think his views right, but greatly fear lest they should be carried too far. We see successive, but not continual fulfilments of Prophecy, neither are we favourable to "*a new view*" of the Apocalypse. Christians have possessed the Bible, and been taught by the Spirit, more or less, for many ages; the Apocalypse has not been given to them wholly in vain, though they may have added to God's Word too many of their own inventions. The interpreter of the Revelation is among rocks noted for shipwrecks, "*infames scopulos Acrocerania.*" May the favouring gale of the Spirit guide his course, and grant him a safe and prosperous voyage.

Two methods might be proposed for a standard work upon Prophecy. The first would take the books of Scripture in their chronological order—giving a view, as it proceeded, of the times, and the writers, in succession. The second method would select its subjects. Much might be said in favour of either. On the whole we would incline to the second. According, then, to the plan of selection, the work might commence with the Prophecies relating to the person of the Messiah—and the passages selected from the Old Testament would nearly coincide with the various testimonies cited by Dr. Pye Smith, to prove the Deity of Christ. Much that is controversial would be omitted, for these passages would be their own evidence—and, as the glorious Being to whom they relate came forth to the view, the Sun of Righteousness would reveal Himself in His own light, in all the effulgence of Deity. Beginning, thus, on a contracted scale, we should more readily perceive the Structure of Prophecy; and be enabled, with the more ease, to trans-

fer that Divine method and arrangement, which we had ascertained in a more plain and restricted portion of the Scriptures, to the diversified and divergent portions which compose the whole. We should also observe, exactly, how Prophecy fits into Prophecy, as stone is fitted to stone,—while the plan and structure of the edifice becomes gradually manifest as it proceeds; and we should be enabled to estimate the cumulative evidence of Prophecy, which augments not only by addition, but multiplication, as the design, and the evidence which accompanies it, more completely manifest themselves to the view. No stronger proof for Christianity can be afforded than its pre-existence in the prophetic writings, while yet the Jewish Dispensation was in its full force and vigour.

A second section of the Prophetic work might disclose the Atonement, as announced by Prophecy; in the same manner as the first section had established the Deity of Christ. And thus, the oneness of design maintained by the Eternal Spirit who dictated the Scriptures, would be apparent from Genesis to Revelation.

A third section would naturally contain the accomplishment of the Prophecies respecting the Jews,—and thus, passing easily from Theology to History, might unite the evidence from Prophecy to the evidence from Miracles; for the Jews, as has often been remarked, are God's standing miracle,—their present position forming a link, obvious to inspection, between their early miraculous history, and the glorious destiny which Prophecy and Providence have reserved for them in the latter days.

After the consideration of the Jews, would come the contemplation of the Nations of Profane History, and of the various dominions which prevailed for a time against God's chosen people. And here the difficulty arises from the superior vitality

of the Word of God. Prophecy remains, where History has perished. Yet, even here, by Divine Providence, where nothing remained of departed Empires but the mounds of their ruins, nations have been again exhumed from their graves to bear witness to the faithfulness of the Divine Oracles. The true study of the Bible has a tendency to enlarge the mind on every side. It is not the lights, but the remaining darkness of science that we have to dread. We re-echo the prayer of the Reformer, "more light, more light!" not upon the verses of the Bible alone, but upon all subjects whatsoever. More insight into antiquity! More acquaintance with history! though, even where history does commence its course, it is too late to throw light upon the remote past, and too partial to pronounce a just sentence upon the contested present. True history would be an anticipation of the final Judgment, reviving the past with all the interest of life; and yet regarding the actors, again brought upon the scene, in the light of Eternity, and as in the immediate presence of the Judge of all. But how difficult to recover the evidence which must decide each perplexing question, not only from the darkness of the past, but from the secrecy in which political obliquity has shrouded itself! Enough however remains, even amid imperfect records, to shew the general correspondence between Prophecy and the events of History.

There are two forms of history with which Prophecy has an especial connexion, but neither of which are yet sufficiently developed; the philosophy of History, and the History of Providences. There have been some imperfect attempts to which the name of the philosophy of history has been given; and some general laws laid down, which are supposed to regulate the course of events; but the true philosophy of history would be a general history, tracing not only the rise, greatness, and

decline of any particular Empire, but embracing the whole progress of the human family, and connecting the flourishing and decay of particular branches, with the growth and development of society at large. We should expect to find a striking correspondence between the large and flowing outlines of Prophecy, and these greater lineaments of the progress of human society.

As all the affairs of Christians are under the guidance of their heavenly Father, we have reason to hope that God will conduct our steps, and order events in such a manner as to shew that He is near to us in all the changes of our short and mortal life; and were a collective history of private providences written, many would be the instances in which an unseen power protecting, and a heavenly wisdom directing all issues to the advantage of His people, would be clearly recognised.

But, still more have we reason to desiderate a work upon public providences, "tracing God in history!" Most manifest are the proofs of design in all the events that have been ascribed to chance, from the earliest days of history down to the present times; and did historians arise, through the Divine blessing, gifted with devout minds, as well as large views, then should we behold the footprints of Deity throughout the whole course of human affairs; and acknowledge, that the voice of history was truly in accordance with the Spirit of Prophecy.

The selection of subjects, in a prophetic work, would probably make the force, if not the fulness, of the evidences from Prophecy more distinct. The pre-existence of Christianity, in the prophetic writings, so long before the facts on which it was founded, might be shewn to afford so high a probability of its Divine origin, as scarcely to be expressed by the power of numbers. But, this high probability would be greatly augmented when it was shewn by what a variety of prophecies, fitting in-

to each other, the whole of this prophetic gospel was framed. Again, the condition of the Jews, as at present existing, is of itself a moral miracle, when the whole of the circumstances are taken into view ; but, when the simple fact is considered along with the pre-intimation of it, thousands of years ago, their conjoined force amounts almost to a demonstration of Christianity. As referring to a single nation, and to a single individual, it is an advantage to consider the evidence resulting from the prophecies respecting our Saviour and the Jews separately, since it is more easily determined, they themselves being determinate prophecies; and then to add the vast, but more vague (on account of their vastness) probabilities, rising from the whole sweep of history, and the rise and fall of so many Empires, as of billows on a tumultuous sea. Thus we should have Prophecy at once throwing light on the Divine origin of Christianity, and pouring its radiance, on the other hand, over the stormy ocean of human affairs.

THE STRUCTURE OF PROPHECY.

THE Bible forms a perfect whole. All the parts correspond, reflect mutual light, and balance each other as a complete system. The truths of the Bible, like the stars of the firmament, revolve around a common centre, and keep each other in their due place and distance. Prophecy forms a large part of the Bible. It is not separated from the rest of the Scriptures, it does not even form particular tractates, but springs up from every part, without being marked off by any distinct line of demarcation. The whole of the Scriptures, looking to the future as well as to the past and to the present, are stamped with the Divine mind of their Author, with whom a thousand years are as one day; and who embraces not only all the ages of time, but the past and the coming eternity in one unbroken and continuous view.

The attempt to cut out prophecy from the sacred writings would be equally vain and impious. The continuity of life throughout the whole, prevents such an excision being effected, without obliterating the Bible itself. Yet it is not uncommon to neglect prophecy on the ground of its being hard to be understood; and many stand aloof, impressed with fear, as they behold one after another bewildered, of those, who have attempted to pry, by the assistance of revelation, into the secrets of futurity.

It is, however, the neglect of prophecy which gives rise to the chief heresies concerning prophecy, and the same observation

holds good with respect to doctrines ; if any truth be disregarded, some exaggerated form of error comes to supply its place. We are neither to add to the word of God nor to diminish aught from it. The neglect of prophecy eventually does both, since it consigns a large and most important portion of inspiration to rest in silence and darkness. But, as Addison observed of rooms shut up and deserted in a house, that they soon acquire the reputation of being haunted, filled with strange sounds, and tenanted by unreal apparitions ; so, neglected prophecy soon finds interpreters to give their own comments on what has been deemed too mysterious for explanation ; and eyes which at first beheld nothing in the darkness of futurity but mist and vacuity, soon perceive with Saul, under the direction of the Pythoness of Endor, mighty shapes ascending, and hear voices predictive of future events.

We have many and excellent commentaries on the Scriptures for devotional purposes, where the same train of thought which has delighted and profited the Church, generation after generation, is over and over again reproduced, with some variety of form ; but a new commentary is desirable, in addition to these, which should point out the general structure of the Bible, indicate how all the parts join in together, fitly framed and compacted, and place the eye of the observer in that point of view where all is seen in the fairest light, and justest proportion. Such a work would explain the Prophecies as well as the other portions of Scripture, tracing each stream of prophecy to its fountain, and observing how each prediction springs out of the circumstances which attended its origin, is in accordance with the situation of the Church at the time of its delivery, and is in correspondence with the peculiar portion of Scripture to which it immediately belongs. But even in addition to such a Commentary, a larger and more peculiar work on Prophecy is wanted fully to expand the view, to trace each of the more important steps of the prophetic Scriptures, at once to illustrate the prophetic figures and language, and to combine the prediction with the predicted event.

It is a great step gained for the due consideration of every science, to understand its relation to other sciences, and to ascertain its place in the general map of human knowledge. We may apply the remark to prophecy. Prophecy is not an anomaly; it springs from the nature of Jehovah, the self-existent and eternal, who gives continuity to existence, and perpetuity to knowledge. Philosophy is prophetic as well as religion—the fact discovered to-day becomes the prediction of that which will take place, under exactly the same circumstances, when ages have rolled away, as long as the present system of creation remains.

History as well as philosophy is prophetic, but with this peculiar difficulty, that circumstances rarely recur so exactly similar, as that the politician, who takes lessons from the past, may calculate with certainty on similar results. The circumstances are apparently the same, but an imperceptible change has occurred, from new and secret elements coming into combination in human affairs. The statesman's rod is uplifted, but the expected electricity no longer descends from the political heavens, or else, without following the predicted course, bursts in an unexpected storm upon his head. But though political augury is thus often frustrated, the moral and retributive cycles of history are constant in their recurrence. Nations are still certainly filling up the cup of wrath; their days are numbered, and the doom that awaits them (foreseen, but not averted by repentance) comes down with unerring aim upon their guilty heads.

The Word of God is all prophetic; it is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Man passes away, but the Divine determinations respecting him continue, accomplished in the fathers, and still to be fulfilled in the children. It is thus that we have a deep and abiding interest in the earliest Scriptures. By believing, we identify ourselves with the people of God in all ages. If God give us Abraham's faith, he gives us at the same time Abraham's portion. If we have Jacob's spirit of prayer, we also, with "all the Israel of God," become princes, and prevail.

Each prophecy has not only its own prophetic import, but

unites its current to the great stream of prophecy ; yields its own light, be it greater or less, but receives its chief illumination from the constellation of predictions with which it is associated. " No prophecy is of private interpretation," or rather, of self solution. It is not to be placed apart, but blended and harmonized with all the predictions that have preceded it, and all that are to follow after.

Each prophecy is thus to be connected with all prophecy, and all prophecy with the general tenor of the Scriptures ; while the Book of God's Word is to be placed in accordance with the Book of his Providence,—Inspiration giving the grand design of God's purposes, and events disclosing the precise how, and when, these purposes are to be carried into effect, in the evolution of God's predetermined plan. Viewed thus, history and revelation shed a mutual light upon each other. The series of events, complicated and chaos-like when considered apart, in themselves, are all bound in harmony and order to the throne of the Eternal ; and prophecy is found, not reserving its illuminations and its consolations for any particular period of the world's history, alone, but, commencing, like the morning star, to shine on the path of the first man, and growing brighter and brighter with the lapse of generations, till it issues in the full light of the perfect day.

It is a striking exemplification of the narrowness of the human mind, that there should be two heretical sects of commentators on prophecy, who may be called by names sufficiently barbarous, rightly to designate them, viz., the Preterists and the Futurists. Those who like the learned Germans see so complete a correspondence in the past as to deem prophecy exhausted, and that we have outlived the predictions of the Eternal ; and those truly unlearned, among ourselves, who knowing of no other existence than that which is contemporary with their own, esteem that all the predictions have been accumulated for their own days, and that they are the witnesses for whom it is reserved to testify to their fulfilment. Far different is the witness which the truth bears to the constant tenor of God's dealings with men. He

has left no age, and no generation of his people unprepared for coming events.

“Nunquam imprudentibus imber
Obfuit,”

Virgil justly observes regarding the husbandman, and this is still more realized with respect to the Divine judgments. The darkening of the natural sky precedes the shower; the political heaven, in like manner, is overcast before the coming tempest; and the warning notes of prophecy are not, to the believer, utterly in vain.

In every age God's people have “a more sure word of prophecy,” or, the prophetic word more and more confirmed to them, as sceptres pass away, and thrones are overthrown; and to this word we “do well to take heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place”—a light which becomes doubly bright, both from its own increasing radiance, and from the deepening gloom, with which the foreshadow of the approaching storms surrounds it. One great source of difficulty in the interpretation of the prophecies is, the variance between the narrowness of man's mind and the infinite mind of God. Prophecy is not merely the divination of future events; these events, however important, are but points in the immense map of God's designs. It is the weakness of the human mind, to desire to pry into futurity, without a moral aim. God's aim, on the contrary, is to raise us above the whirl of passing events, and to fix our attentive gaze on the Divine hand which is moving all the complicated wheels of Providence. God, in his revelations, is spreading before the mind the sublime visions of futurity; while man is disputing about the precise date, when, perhaps, some imagination of his own will assume “a local habitation and a name” in the registry of the world's annals. Often the commentator is bringing a most prosaic mind, to the consideration of the sublimest poetry. “How can two walk together except they be agreed?” and no book can be well understood, unless it be read in somewhat of the same spirit in which it was written. “The Apocalypse of St. John,” says Milton, “is the majestic image of a high and

stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies;" and though this is being over-imaginative, yet Milton is much nearer, in spirit, to the Divine original, than many that have presumed to handle the subject, altogether devoid of the sacred glow, which would have conducted them along the footprints of the Apostle John. Instead of perceiving that the prophecies were written in the free and flowing outlines of poetry, they have gone on spelling figure after figure, as if they were slowly deciphering the hieroglyphics of some Egyptian temple. We, on the contrary, should prepare ourselves by listening reverently, for a time, to the "chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies," that our hearts may be rightly attuned, before we descend from that high region, to mark all the particular eventualities on earth. Neither should we at any time neglect the doctrinal aspect of prophecy; nor, for example, while "a door is open in heaven," and the everlasting portals of the heavenly temple are unbarred to admit our view, should we lightly regard the new proof, which is there furnished us, for the absolute Deity of Christ, in the *one* throne for God and the Lamb, and in the *one* worship with which Jehovah and Jesus are conjointly praised; nor, avoid observing how the redeemed and the angels are united in the same worship, and both combined in the same scheme of Divine government, by which the Messiah has become the Head of all, "reconciling unto himself all things, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth."

But the doctrinal aspect of the prophecies might fill a large space, in an ample work, upon the prophetic writings, where every portion, of the vast subject, might duly find a separate consideration.

All the Bible is fitted to keep up that perpetual intercourse between the soul and God, which is its life and health. But in what part of the Bible do we find God more nigh to us than in the prophetic Scriptures, where the veil is removed from the invisible sovereignty that ruleth over all; and where the Almighty arm is plainly revealed, bringing speedy succour to his

servants, but executing vengeance upon his enemies? In this respect, how different often is the commentary from the text. In the Bible we have God immediately present with us, unfolding his vast designs, from eternity to eternity. In the commentaries we have, too often, vain janglings and perpetual disputes, among those who profess to interpret; each anxious to bring forward some peculiar view, and to rear up some conspicuous edifice, upon the ruins of the Babels of his predecessors. A true interpreter will cease from the questions that "gender strifes," and if he cannot altogether escape from the noise of contending disputants, will endeavour to withdraw his attention, in some degree, from their vain tumults, while he fixes his earnest gaze on the immense procession of emblematic events, disclosed by Divine inspiration; and listens, with awe, to the reverberating thunders, which fill the circuit of the mystic heavens.

How is the confirmed word of prophecy shaken by the rash comments and interpretations of men! What more stable than the declarations of God, when we neither add to, nor diminish from, their sacred import! What, on the other hand, so gratifying to the infidel, so stumbling to the worldly-minded, so painful to the judicious Christian, as the wild and discordant war of words which too often proceeds from the mouths of those who profess to explain the import of the Divine oracles!

We may propound, perhaps, as a safe rule, that the interpreters of prophecy are most generally right where they agree, and oftenest wrong when they differ from each other. As their agreements are comparatively few, and their differences very many, this would greatly reduce the bulk of accredited interpretation; but so much the better, so would the commentary be more in accordance with the text. The Scriptures are remarkable for their brevity. Truth is nowhere so condensed as in them; and when our Saviour gives a commentary on his own parables, the commentary is as brief and as weighty as the text.

Something might be done towards reconciling the warring interpreters of prophecy, if they would allow those peculiarities

of opinion, which they place in the foreground, modestly to remain in the shade, and recede into the distance. Prophecies receive, as Bacon observes, some peculiar fulness of accomplishment, in some one age or place, but have, besides, many "springing and germinant accomplishments;" and thus, events, which it would be erroneous to consider as the chief objects of the prophecy, might yet be brought forward, as the repeated fulfilment of the same Divine plan.

We may judge of the Divine intentions regarding prophecy, by what it has generally accomplished. It has not made men diviners. God still reserves "the times and the seasons," the exact how, and the exact when, "in his own power." They who have assumed themselves to be prophets, instead of humble interpreters of prophecy, have, from age to age, been covered with confusion. Like a thief in the night, to which it is compared, the accomplishment of the prophecy comes when it is least expected, and in a manner beyond the calculations of men. It might be said, the eye hath not seen, nor the mind of man conceived, the way in which God, whose footsteps are on the dark waters, will bring to pass his own predictions. Eve was the first interpreter of prophecy, and she has been the prototype of many of her followers. She mistook Cain for the great deliverer. "I have got the (promised) man from Jehovah."

Were a list drawn out of the false expectations of the interpreters of prophecy, they would spread, from the commencement of the Faith, over all the succeeding ages of the Christian era. From a misunderstood expression of St. Paul's, his disciples imagined he would be alive at the personal advent of Christ. The impression went far and wide that St. John would never taste of death, but, that before his natural life should have terminated, the heavenly state would have begun. Few doubted, till instructed by revelation to the contrary, that Christ would appear in person to execute vengeance on Jerusalem; and, uninstructed by the disappointment of their hopes, whenever wars and rumours of wars prevailed, as in the subsequent insurrections of the Jews, many of the Christians no less firmly expected the

return of Jesus, than the Jews did the Advent of their triumphant Messiah, to terminate the conflict. In addition to the fallacious expectations everywhere springing up, whenever the political atmosphere was clouded, and the kingdoms of the earth shaken, there were periods of still stronger confidence, and deeper delusion throughout Christendom; such as the year 500, after the ruin of the Roman Empire; and, more especially, the year 1000, when every legal charter began with the words, "As the end of the world is approaching," and when people were in haste to bequeath, to religious purposes, that property which they no longer hoped to retain for themselves. And these moods of mind were again and again revived by every portent and prodigy,—by the approach of a comet, or by the approach of the Tartars, till the Reformation finally broke out, and the Fifth Monarchy men arose—a sect, never to be completely extinguished, till the Millennium itself, either confirms their hopes, or finally extinguishes their dreams.

The certainty of the event, and the uncertainty of the time and manner, fully accomplish the Divine intentions in prophecy. Prophecy is to keep us watchful, prepared, and prayerful, at all times. But if we knew at what hour the enemy was coming, we might indulge in slumber, till the moment of trial arrived. The prophets, themselves, had to search in the prophetic writings, respecting the events which were about to be fulfilled. The approximation of the time was known, not the exact period. Such has ever been the state of mind of the people of God. They have been more and more stirred up to prayer, as Daniel was, when the time of the accomplishment drew near. They have been waiting, like Anna and Simeon, in prayer, till the Lord whom they sought suddenly came to his temple. They have had a deep sense of the coming judgments, like Paul in the Hebrews, and Peter in his Epistles, when destruction was impending over the Jews, but without determining the exact year. The Christians, though they had to flee from Jerusalem, knew not the day of their departure, but were doubtless praying that it might not be in unfavourable circumstances, nor in the winter

time; when, the momentary glittering of the Roman ensigns, before Jerusalem, gave them an urgent signal to flee; and again, those eagles, retiring for a moment, beyond all expectation, gave them room to escape. The primitive Christians prayed for the continuance of the persecuting Roman Empire, as the lesser evil, since it prevented the rise of the dreaded Antichrist; yet without being able to determine when the one would cease, or the other begin. The Christians, previous to the fall of Rome, were well aware (warned by prophecy) of the approaching dissolution of the Empire; and saw, that the Barbarian clay, was already mixing with the Roman iron, yet knew not the exact moment when the Empire would cease, and the ten kingdoms begin. They were none of them prophets, but they were forewarned of these changes, and, in some degree, prepared for them, by prophecy; and, in like manner, the Christian of the present day, feels intimately persuaded that he is living in the very last days of these ten kingdoms, when the clay and the iron are already beginning to separate, yet cannot predict the day, nor the hour, when the stone without hands, shall break them into powder, and the whirlwinds of desolation sweep them away.

The Divine scheme of prophecy, in its general outline, was well understood by Bacon. His large and capacious mind—which entered into the Divine plans, and was prophetic of a future science of nature, not then existing—from the faculties with which God had peculiarly endowed him, seemed at home and at large also among the prophetic writings, if we may judge by the few indications he has left behind him. The remarks of Sir Isaac Newton upon prophecy, are not unworthy of his exalted genius, and far-seeing intellect, though, researches in prophecy would have required more caution, even from his patient mind, than the investigation of nature and the heavens. Lowth, who by an instinctive taste entered into the very life of Hebrew poetry, has also shewed an acquaintance with the true spirit of prophecy, in his general remarks upon the prophetic writings. Warburton, though an unsafe guide, from the over-vehemence which accompanied his natural force of mind, has left able and

just remarks on the genius of Hebrew prophecy; and Hurd, though apt to be finical, where his great master was paradoxical, has bequeathed us one of the best prophetic works, in his excellent Dissertations. Bishop Newton's work is still deservedly esteemed, with many others, which it is needless to particularize, in a sketch like the present.

But not to go back to the times of the departed, we gladly acknowledge the merit of many contemporaries, who have laboured, and still labour, in the vast field of prophecy; among whom we need only cite Mr. Gaussen of Geneva, Mr. Elliot of England, and Dr. Keith in Scotland, whose works are so justly admired, and are in such extensive circulation. But whatever be the strength of mind brought to bear upon the subject, we must repeat it, the great, the ever-recurring difficulty of prophecy is the narrowness of the human intellect, and the vastness of the Divine designs. Prophecy, springing from the Eternal, is the image of the Infinite. The first prophecy contains the germ of all the rest. The nature of prophecy is ever expanding, and it is ever widening its far distant horizon. As we ascend the mount of vision, the eminences that at one time bounded the view, sink into border hills; and disclose, behind them, far higher elevations. As Lowth observes, it is in prophecy as in a picture; we have the foreground, the middle distance, and the remote horizon; and the prophetic picture extends in succession from the immediate objects which surround us, till it blends with the remotest scenes, of a far distant futurity. These three graduated fulfilments of prophecy he marks in many of the predictions of Isaiah: the first notes of the song of triumph prepare the march of the returning exiles from Babylon—but, they are few in number, and dispirited by the loss of companions, who willingly remain behind. A still deeper note of triumph sounds: it is the march of the Messiah himself through the wilderness, and fountains of the water of life spring up as he passes through the desert. But, "who hath believed the report?" The unbelief that clouded the return of the captives from Babylon, impedes the progress of Messiah's empire, and a great falling

away takes place. Yet, in the remote distance, there are still louder pæans of victory, and the notes of triumph are ascending on all sides, and never ending; for now the fulness of the Gentiles is brought in, and the scattered of Israel are all gathered together, and the Messiah reigns for evermore to the earth's remotest bounds. Thus every single prophecy flows, in an enlarging stream, towards its own accomplishment, and joins the mighty river of life, which is hastening onwards, to the ocean of eternity. Like the Alps, which seem to the traveller, while yet at a distance, but a long range of snowy eminences—yet, as he approaches nearer to them, present chain after chain of mountains, rising one above the other, with deep valleys, and long intervals; so the prophecies, after their first accomplishment, continue their unbroken course, and receive new fulfilments; rising higher and higher, till they attain their greatest elevations, amid the serene skies of the latter-day glory; and that which appeared, at first view, when foreshortened, but a single mountain, which might be easily encompassed, stretches like the forest ranges Milton describes—"from Sennar eastward that long line of hills." And the whole tide of prophecy rises on the beholder's mind—wave after wave, distinctly separated, if he stand upon the shore; but, if like Homer's shepherd he ascend an eminence, overhanging the sea, the distinct termination of each is lost, and he sees but one continuous sheet of foam, and the blending of one interminable roll of billows, rushing on towards the shore.

The soul is in its right position only when conversing with God. Contentions with captious disputants, if long pursued, break up this intercommunity of the mind. He who opens the Scriptures, should do so, with the same feelings with which Adam walked out into Paradise, fainting with the heat of an almost tropical climate, yet expecting to be refreshed by hearing the voice of God, borne on the wind of the day that tempered the noon-tide heats; the emblem of the Holy Spirit, with its accompanying and reviving breath.

True religion is Heaven begun in the soul; and the written

word forms the chain of connexion between us and the ever-living word—the fountain of our renewed life. But prophecy brings us into the nearest confidential intercourse with God. All religion is founded in the concurrence of our spirits with the Spirit of God, and with the word of God. But, in prophecy, God calls upon us to share in his counsels, and to become cognizant of his intimate designs; that, with filial confidence, in return for a Father's confiding love, we may be in a prepared state of mind to welcome all the changes which God is bringing upon the world, in order to usher in, his everlasting kingdom of righteousness. "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I design to do?" is the very expression of prophecy, to his people, in all ages, who are partakers of Abraham's faith, and, consequently, of his friendship with the Most High.

Another practical impression we would desire earnestly, ever to bear in mind—"Maran-atha," the Lord is at hand. The comings of the Lord are very various, and must, to a certain extent, be figurative; for the Deity is everywhere present, and comes not from place to place, though he manifests his presence chiefly to those who believe him, and expect his manifestations. The Lord is ever coming to judge his enemies, and to deliver his servants; but ages elapse without any signal *public* manifestation of his presence and his power. Not so with respect to individual believers; in regard to them, "Maran-atha," the Lord is, and has been, continually at hand. Two comings they have, especially to look for, and to pray for, at all times. "I stand at the door and knock," saith the Lord; "if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Such an Advent the world knows nothing of; yet has it been truly experienced by eminent believers, though often at distant intervals of their chequered life. Such, to mention only two instances, Flavel experienced, when so great a gush of heavenly joy filled his soul, that he seemed scarcely able to sustain the transports he experienced. Such, Howe has recorded twice or thrice, in his private journal, when his breast was filled with a glow of Divine love, and with the

foretastes of Heaven. Such we should all prayerfully desire to experience, in the midst of the wilderness of life; when, following the footsteps of our Redeemer, we also have drunk of the wells of life by the way, and have lifted up the head.

But there is another coming not less delightful to the believer, though more solemn—the coming of the Lord Jesus at the moment of death. We stand on the brink of Jordan, and we expect the great Forerunner to join us on the hither bank, and to divide the dark and bitter waters of death for us, that we may pass, dry shod, to the Heavenly Canaan. This coming, should be far more earnestly and prayerfully expected. It forms part of the covenant of mercy, that the Divine shepherd, who has guided us all our life long, should be present with us through the dark valley of the shadow of death; and that, piercing through that darkness, the light of heaven should already begin to shine upon the departing soul. Could we realize these two comings, the visitations of the Lord Jesus in life, and his immediate support of us when life is about to close, we should be prepared for every other coming; and should wait, in the right temper of mind, for the outburst of the latter-day glory, should it be our lot to behold its long expected dawn.

The series of ancient prophecy may be divided into four successive periods:—I. The patriarchal period, including the times of Genesis and Job.—II. The giving of the Law, where the four last Books of the Pentateuch would be properly considered.—III. The Historical period, from Joshua, till the Israelitish monarchy reached its fulness in David and Solomon. And, IV. The period of the fulness of Prophecy, when the glories of the Messiah's kingdom are most clearly announced, while the splendours of the Jewish monarchy were fast passing away. The interval when the prophetic voice was silent, before the coming of Christ, separates the ancient prophecy from its renewal under the new dispensation. Still, though there is an interval of time, there is no change in the spirit and genius of prophecy, and the predictions of the Old and New Testament fit in together, continue the same strains, and employ the same imagery.

The first period is the Patriarchal, commencing immediately upon the fall of man, and the memory of which is retained in the oldest record of the human race. Genesis is the earliest document in existence, and appears like the fragment of a former world. The most ancient profane writings stop short of the great change that was produced in society by the establishment of the hereditary priesthood, and the division of mankind into castes; institutions which intercepted the simple light of early tradition, and gave an air of fable, and mythical colouring, to whatever slight vestiges might still remain, in the fading memory, of the early fortunes of our race. The Hindoo writings (for example), which have pretensions to a remote antiquity, are evidently the creation or fiction of the priesthood; adapted to a highly artificial state of manners, where mythology has obliterated the traces of history, and produced a complete oblivion of former events.

The earliest idolatry was the worship of the heavenly bodies. This is at once acknowledged and concealed, in the complex superstition of the Hindoos and Egyptians. These systems of the priesthood are therefore, evidently, not of the highest antiquity.

Genesis goes not only beyond the priesthood, but beyond the earliest idolatry of the heavenly bodies; and thus, independent of its inspired origin, is of inestimable value, as preserving the original title-deeds of the human family, before they were superseded by documents, fabricated for the benefit of particular classes, to the detriment of the public weal. It is true, in the time of Moses, the priesthoods of Egypt and of the East appear, already, fully formed; but, though Genesis be justly ascribed to Moses, as its author, yet it contains in itself, also, fragments of far earlier ages; some, professedly, quoted; such as, the address of Lamech to his wives; others, tacitly implied, as in the commencing history of man; where there are repetitions of the account in a slightly different form, shewing independent and varying, though not contradictory, sources of information. It is in Genesis as in geology; while we are surveying some vast fragment of a former world, of higher antiquity than all that

surrounds it; even in that fragment we distinguish traces of other fragments, broken off from still earlier formations, and recomposed in the body which still survives. The sceptical writers who first dwelt on this piecing in of Genesis, considered it derogatory to the authority of the work; and some of the recent German orthodox writers, who attempt to deny it, appear to have the same feeling, but without any just cause. Nothing to a philosophic mind can give a greater value to the writings of Moses than to behold him, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, carefully gathering up the fragments of ancient history and early inspiration, whether in Genesis or Job, and giving them a permanent form, which was to last unto the end of time; previous to his announcing the Law given upon Mount Sinai, and committing to writing the typical dispensation of the Jews.

We propose but a sketch; a large work upon the Prophecies would dwell, and with advantage, on all the concomitants of the first prophecy—the place, the Garden of Eden,—the temptation, the tree of knowledge,—the fall, beginning in doubt, and accomplished in disobedience. No man has seen God, the Infinite, at any time; nor can the Infinite be the object of sight, though of intuition. Our first parents saw and conversed with God—walking with man, that man might walk with God for evermore. They therefore saw Jehovah revealed to them in “The Word,” and talking with them as a man does with his friend, before Jesus assumed our nature, to suffer for us, and to save us. God, who came as a friend before the fall, came as a judge after the fall. This is then the first coming to judgment; and the judgment is most awful, from the mildness, forbearance, and the full consideration given to every particular circumstance. Each transgression, and each transgressor, meets a due recompense of reward.

Here we may observe, that both the Scriptures and God’s proceedings form full periods. They come round to the point where they began, but with an overwhelming increase of sublimity. The last chapters of the Revelation return to the first

chapters of Genesis; they replace man in Paradise, with the tree of life, and with the river of life: but the regained Paradise is as much greater than the lost Paradise, as the Heaven of heavens is greater and more august than the earth.

In like manner, the last judgment, forming a full period with the first judgment, will be the bringing to light of every secret thing, and the pronouncing an unchangeable doom upon the fearful revelation of the world's iniquity, from the beginning until the end. Yet, in pronouncing sentence, God shews himself the same at the first, as he continues through the whole of the dispensation, "a just God, and yet a Saviour;" and, also, a God who will select his objects of mercy. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The true way to understand the map of prophecy is to trace the stream from its fountain. All things are simplest in their commencements; if we do not mark the manner in which the first prophecies were accomplished, we shall the less be able to comprehend the fulfilment of the rest. It is evident that many interpreters of prophecy have not attended to this. Some have given it as their great argument for interpreting the New Testament prophecies strictly according to the letter, that all were agreed that the Old Testament prophecies, without an exception, had a literal accomplishment, and a literal accomplishment only. Interpreted in this mode, the first prophecy speaks of the serpent, therefore the killing of serpents is the literal fulfilment of the prophecy. It speaks of the son of the woman; the first born is the son, and, accordingly, Eve understood it of Cain; so that if Cain slew a serpent, here is the literal fulfilment of the prophecy! which, being precluded from a spiritual and extended sense, would be more futile than even the predictions of the oracle of Delphi. But, the merely literal accomplishment of prophecy is in fact but a repetition of the prophecy; it is a renewed prophecy by signs, instead of words, of that which is afterwards to take place. The warfare which the human race have carried on, and successfully, with the serpent brood, has

been merely a repetition by emblems, of the predicted warfare which the spiritual seed have been carrying on against the spiritual "old serpent, who is the devil:" which prediction received its high accomplishment when Christ, at his crucifixion and resurrection, triumphed over sin and Satan; when the Conqueror bruised Satan's head, after the tempter had bruised the victor's heel. And the same prediction will receive its final accomplishment when Christ, at the last day, as the judge of the living and the dead, shall bring back in triumph his redeemed people, replace them in the Heavenly Paradise, and consign the old serpent, and original enemy of the race, to everlasting chains of darkness. We have in this one prophecy a sample of all prophecy; it stretches from the beginning to the end of time; it includes the literal fulfilment, but does not rest in it; makes even the literal fulfilment a renewed and outstanding prophecy and pledge, that the whole shall be fulfilled in the largest sense, when the fulness of time is come.

The second prophecy, in point of time, is that preserved by Jude, of Enoch, "The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," &c. This points to a different coming from the coming of the seed of the woman—a coming to execute vengeance. Before the event, it might have been expected from this prediction, that the Lord would appear in solemn pomp, with the clouds of heaven, and with myriads of his holy ones. The clouds of heaven did come, gathering blackness over the heads of those impenitent sinners, for whom was reserved the blackness of darkness for ever—these clouds opened to pour out their deluge of waters, but not to display to the eyes of perishing sinners the advent in full majesty of the Lord of glory, though all, the few who were saved, and the many who perished, felt his presence and his power.

In numbering the direct prophecies, we would wish to note that prophecy is not confined to these. The material creation in Genesis is presignificant of the new moral creation, and the Spirit of God, moving over the dark and stormy abyss, foreshadows his brooding over the moral world, and, where all was chaos repro-

ducing life and order. The earthly paradise, we have observed, is typical of heaven: Cain and Abel themselves displayed the enmity between the true seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—and Abel, the “man of sorrows” of the early world, put to death, the just by the unjust, was a type of the future Messiah. But in this sketch we have to deal only with the direct prophecies, and of them, with but a few.

The third prophecy is that of Lamech, when he called his son's name Noah, saying, “this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed.” But the rest that was found in Noah was chiefly typical, and prophetic of the everlasting rest which the believer finds in the Messiah.

When the antediluvian sinners were removed by the flood, the first generations of renovated man found comparative repose and abundant room; and, supported by their flocks, obtained rest from the curse of tilling the soil, uniting a slight and easy culture to the pastoral life, while they followed their flocks under a serene sky; and, while they adhered to the true religion, there was rest and reconciliation with God, through the appointed sacrifices. The bow in the cloud, which spoke of God's covenant with man, was also typical of the bow of reconciliation round the throne of the Eternal. But the literal fulfilment of the rest under Noah, like all that is merely literal, was imperfect and transitory, and the true rest was only found in the remote descendant of Noah, like him “the father of the future age,” but under new heavens, and upon a new earth, where righteousness and peace shall dwell for evermore.

In the fourth prophecy, relating to the sons of Noah, we have another striking example of the vast extent to which even a single prediction reaches. The descendants of Ham, the father of Canaan, far from bearing the mark of slavery, at first, had rather for their portion the ensigns of sovereignty. The Cushites raised the first empire, and promoted the earliest civilisation; and Egypt, “the land of Ham,” was a monarchy, not only the most ancient, but perhaps the most enduring, stretching far

beyond the twelve centuries which the Tuscan augurs affixed as the limit of imperial sway. But, in due season, the prophecy began to take hold upon the whole race of Ham. The Cushites were early scattered far and wide. Egypt became "a base kingdom," and the fatal destiny of Carthage was acknowledged by the ablest of her sons. At last the fortunes of Japhet, who had retired far to the north, and to what were considered the regions of obscurity and night, began to emerge amid the splendour of victory; and his sons not only carried their conquering ensigns to the East and to the West, beyond the ken of ancient history, but redescended to the South, and founded immense monarchies in regions which seemed properly to belong to the other races of mankind. Down to the present moment, the predestined race of Japhet, the "audax Iapeti genus" of the Roman poet, are enlarging more and more with every succeeding century, and seem only prevented, by their mutual checks and intestine warfare, from attaining the long indulged dream of universal empire. It is unnecessary, and there is not space here, to remark how often the promise was fulfilled of God's "tabernacling," or dwelling, in the tents of Shem, before the Lord Jesus took up his tabernacle in the Semitic race, though this be an instance well illustrating the words of Bacon regarding the springing and germinant accomplishments of prophecy, previous to their entire fulfilment. It is enough to remark that, in this short prediction, we have a stream of time, and course of history, flowing down to the present moment, and stretching forward to a point in futurity which is not yet fully ascertained.

In the calling of Abraham we have the type and protoplast of that separated people who were to serve God in all generations; to each of them the voice of God comes, not to the outward ear, but to the inward heart, "Get thee out," in spirit at least, "unto a land that I will shew thee." There is not, as in Abraham's case, the long array of camels, and the appearance of an eastern pilgrimage, nor formal leave-taking of friends and country; but there is, it may be, a still deeper sense of desolation in departure, when we plunge into that mighty stream which separates

us from all former hopes and objects, though it opens to us a better land which, not the eye of sense, but the revelation of God must shew us. The history and the fortune of Abraham become ours; having one faith with him, we are to be of the same spirit; meditating upon God's dealings with him, we read our own destiny; and expect that Jehovah will do unto us, in His unbounded grace and munificence, as He did, for an example, unto the father of all the faithful.

One of the most remarkable prophecies, is the prophecy, not by words, but by actions, of Abraham offering up his son Isaac, which has been so well displayed by Warburton and others, but which, in a large work upon prophecy, might still admit of some additional illustrations. Had a prophet, instead of a typical intimation, come to Abraham to announce at once the command, the performance, and the result, it is evident that we should have here a prediction with a double sense; the first accomplishment referring literally, but partially, to Isaac, the latter to the Messiah, the remote descendant of Abraham, the Lamb of God who was provided as a substitute in that very place, and who there took upon him the sins of the world.

Our limits only permit us to notice a few of the prophecies, but we may remark the prediction respecting Ishmael, on account of some misrepresentations and some misconceptions concerning it. The Arabs rightly trace their origin to three sources. To Ishmael as the noblest, including the other descendants of Abraham; from whom sprung the Koreish, the leading race among the Arabs; and the false prophet Mahomet. Secondly, to Joktan, to whom, perhaps, the greater number are related. And lastly, to a third, and to the Arabs an unknown source, but whom we, from the information of the Bible, may ascertain to be the Cushites, men of other manners and another superstition. Gibbon remarks on the subjection of a part of Arabia, occasionally, to the Persian or African invaders, this was, probably, the Cushite race of the south; and he himself allows that his objections are of little consequence. A more grave objection has been started from no unfriendly quarter, incautiously, and

almost unconsciously, by the great linguist, the late Professor Murray, who traces the obvious accomplishment of the prophecy to the nature of the Arabian desert. Undoubtedly God works by means, and the nature of their country promoted the independence of the Ishmaelites. They had but to follow the direction of the prophet—"dwell deep;" and, retiring to the recesses and the secret wells of the wilderness, the invaders wasted away, without a thrust of the lance, or a stroke of the scimitar. But Professor Murray seems to have forgotten that there was another race, dwelling in a country similarly situated,—a race of far higher reputation in the wars of Rome and of Carthage than the Arabs ever were, before the time of Mahomet; the Berber tribes—the Numidian horsemen—whose lightning charge gave victory, first to the Carthaginians under Hannibal, and then, by their subsequent defection, to the Romans. Did the nature of their country preserve them in independence? No! Prophecy spoke of the subjection of the African races; and the strength of their country proved of little avail.

The Book that immediately follows in succession to Genesis, both in time and in manners, is the sublime poem of Job, where the scene is laid in Edom, or the land of Uz, ("O Edom, that dwelleth in the land of Uz!") where friends of the same race with himself asserted the purity of their descent, (as children of one father, with whom strangers did not intermingle,) and the purity of their religion, by the magistrates and heads of tribes watching over the least tendency to idolatry. The contradiction between the speakers in the Book of Job, has been insisted on, as an argument against the entire and absolute truth of the Bible. Now, we unhesitatingly maintain that the Book of Job is all true, although the speakers contradict each other. The reason for this, we trust, can be made apparent. The revelations of God are ever expanding, in general gradually, but at times with a sudden outburst of light. The Book of Job is one of those instances of sudden expansion. God was about to bring life and immortality, if not into full light, for that was reserved for the Gospel, yet out of the previous obscurity in which the

more immediate retributions of Providence had continued to retain it. The sayings of the friends of Job are not their own; they are welled forth from the dictates of ancient experience; they are true with respect to that experience, when punishment and reward, and the consequences of actions were made more evident, by the cycle of retribution being completed, before the life of the individual was closed. But God was about to bring a thick horror of great darkness over his chosen people Israel, and as an encouragement to them, he brought a horror of darkness and calamity upon his chosen servant Job, that he might give an example of the *Palingenesia*, which many of the heathen nations expected. This restitution is marked in the case of Job, who received double of all that he possessed before, with the exception of his children. These could only be considered as doubled, by the confidence, that though removed from this earthly scene, they were enjoying a blessed immortality; an exception which still more strongly pointed to the doctrine of "the restitution of all things." We see from the unfolding of the design of the Book of Job, how naturally the great prophecy of the Resurrection sprung from it; and how, like all other prophecies, it is in accordance with the Book in which it was written, and with the circumstances out of which it sprung. It speaks to the heart of an Arab; it introduces the character of the Redeemer, and the Avenger, on which so much of Arab life rests. It ascribes to the Living One the same desire to vindicate his kindred from the power of the enemy, which the Arab feels, in pursuing the murderer of his kinsmen. It is a beautiful instance, also, of the double sense of prophecy. It applies, in the literal, and lowest sense, to the restitution which Job was about immediately to experience by the visible interposition of God in his favour; while the introduction refers to an accomplishment, in the most distant times. "Oh! that my words were written; that they were engraven on a tablet!" That might last for a few generations, but the prophecy would survive these frail characters, and still require a farther accomplishment. "Oh! that," like the laws which are to endure as

long as a nation, "they were cut with a style of iron upon lead." But nations must perish, and their tables of law be trampled into dust, before the appointed time comes. "Oh! that they were sculptured on a rock for ever," like the inscriptions which remain of the earliest dynasties, proclaiming to all the world, while time shall last, Job's triumphant expectation of a resurrection. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

In this case, we may consider prophecy as having either a double sense, or that the first sense is a repetition of the prophecy; not in words but in life and in action. Both the words of Job, and the restored life and prosperity of Job, loudly proclaiming, and being a certain pledge, that God watches over the dust of his servants, and will restore them to life in his presence, and to joy for evermore.

Connected with the prophecy in Job, is the prediction of Balaam, the last of the seers who were not of the line of Israel; but whose predictions, as Lowth observes, afford some of the purest specimens of Hebrew poetry,—a poetry that was common to the kindred tribes who spoke the same language towards the East, and who had thus, from their position, the means of diffusing or deepening the expectation of a great king and deliverer, whose reign should be universal; for, "to him should the gathering of the nations be." Many of the prophecies of Balaam receive their first, and literal fulfilment, in David; but, great as the reputation of David is, even to the present day, among the Orientals, there is no trace of their having considered, for a moment, the expectations of the East fulfilled in him, or that they had ever ceased looking forward to the time of the Advent of the Messiah; so far from it, the wise men hailed at once the long predicted star, that was to rise as the signal and omen of happier times, and of the Prince of Peace.

II. The second period is that of the giving of the law by

Moses; all the rites of which were shadowy of good things to come. These prophetic rites, though uttering no voice, were ever presented to the eye of the people, day after day, and year after year. It was a noble spectacle, even when not spiritually understood, that Jewish ritual; ever revolving, like the lights of Heaven, which determined its periods, with the solemn service of the sanctuary, and the goodly apparel and mystic ordinance of the priesthood, all ministering according to the order of their courses; and, though individuals "were not suffered to continue, by reason of death," yet having their vacancies filled up from the prescribed families, and in the appointed and never-failing succession! It was no mean sight that the Herodian king beheld from his high raised palace; and though of Edomite origin, and sprung of proselytes made by force, yet might he justly glory in the law of the nation to which he was joined; which thus, with somewhat of the continuance of nature, rather than like the varying institutions of man, exhibited the same solemn scene continually to the view. But, had his eyes been opened to discern its true import, he would have perceived a revelation of mercy, which opened out a far higher ritual, in the service of the heavenly temple; and, as he who gazes upon nature, receives a double delight when he perceives that all the outward shows and phenomena he beholds are hieroglyphics, denoting the attributes and the presence of an unseen but universal spirit; so, he who penetrated the hieroglyphics of the Jewish ritual would discern, not only that Jehovah was there, but, that God was to become man; at once to fulfil all the precepts of the moral law, and all the types of the ceremonial observances.

Thoroughly to understand the divine law, it is beneficial to observe some of the human sources whence a part of the customs were derived, in order that all the circumstances may be placed before the view at once. And this is the more necessary, as infidels have so often made use of this topic, to throw discredit and doubt on the Mosaic legislation. *First*, the customs of the Jews were those of the pastoral tribes; customs springing so

naturally from their mode of life, that many of them are retained, to the present day, amongst tribes that have small affinity or connexion with the race of Israel. *Secondly*, while dwelling in Egypt, the Israelites, though separated from the Egyptians by the land that was assigned them, and by the pastoral occupations they pursued, were yet partly intermixed with them, when the two races came into mutual contact on the borders. The acquaintance of the Israelites with Egyptian customs was probably superficial, but that of Moses was profound. He differs, indeed, in his accounts of Egypt from the Greeks; and infidels, making the Greeks their standard, have taxed him with ignorance. But a deeper acquaintance with Egyptian law shews that Moses was profoundly versed in it, the Greeks but superficially. The Greeks who visited Egypt knew little of the language, saw the monarchy in its declining days, and misunderstood the scanty information they received. Moses, though making only indirect references to Egyptian laws and customs, is corroborated by all the monuments, and proves that the language, and the arts, and the life of Egypt, were familiar to him, in the palmiest days of its kings and its priests. Thus acquainted with Egypt, Moses, under the Divine direction, retained some Egyptian rites and rejected others, always keeping the great end of his legation in view,—the separation of a peculiar people, and the foreshadowing of the times of the Messiah.

A third source of Jewish customs, which has been overlooked by infidel writers, modern research will bring more and more into view. A similarity exists between an Israelitish custom and an Egyptian custom. The origin is by the infidel ascribed to Egypt; but afterwards a new similarity is found between that which is Egyptian, and that which is Assyrian and Babylonian. The true result is at last reached; to none of these is the invention to be ascribed, but it is to be traced to the earliest civilisation, and the ancient progenitors of mankind. Thus, to take two instances, the Cherubim and the Ark; the Cherubim are supposed to be well known to the readers of the Books of Moses; they were, therefore, not recent personifications of mighty powers.

An unbeliever sees these composite creatures in the emblematic figures of Egypt, in the sphinxes, for example, which guard the temple; not the sphinxes of later days, when a lion is surmounted by a female head, but royal and crowned heads, with the names of ancient monarchs inscribed upon them, denoting that the kings who had passed away were still the protectors of the temples they had erected. But the same figures are found among the Assyrians, as the guardians of the temples and palaces, agreeing with the Egyptian man-lions and other composite figures, and denoting, not the deities, but the genii, or in Greek terms, the demons or souls of departed heroes still protecting their original abodes. In this case, it is not the Jews who have borrowed from the Gentiles, but the Gentiles who have borrowed from the original personifications of the human race.

With respect to the Ark, infidels, when first admitted to view the mysteries of ancient Egypt, exclaimed, "here is the Ark of the Jews," whenever they beheld an ark depicted in the processions of Egypt. The similarity is greatest at first view. A sacred ark was not exclusively Egyptian. Sometimes in a lunar form, sometimes like a large maritime vessel, it reappears in different parts of the world. The Egyptian ark seems somewhat altered from the original, and accommodated to the Nile. The ark of Israel is entirely removed from all reference either to the sea or to the river; it is a plain and portable box for including and transporting the tables of the law. Thus, on near inspection, the resemblance vanishes, and the essential difference remains. A still greater difference exists between the figure of Truth, which the Egyptian judge wore round his neck, and the Urim and Thummim, "the twelve oracular gems," borne by the High-Priest of Israel, in token of the Great High-Priest bearing all the tribes of the spiritual Israel for ever on his heart.

On the whole, it would generally be found, that though Moses did not reject Egyptian symbols, either already adopted by the sons of Jacob, or convenient for his purpose; yet the whole scope of Jewish legislation is so different from the Egyptian,

that the apparent similarities are diminished the more we consider them; and the difference will be the deeper felt the more the genius of each ritual is fully understood.

The law, however, though prophetic, does not come fully under the domain of prophecy, but forms an important subject of itself, deserving of separate consideration. The same may be said of Scripture narrative generally, and of all the deliverers whom God raised up, from time to time, among his people; living emblems of a greater deliverer who was yet to come.

III. Here, we mark, as a third period, the prophetic events of the Jewish history. The very name of Joshua, or Jesus, recalls to mind the great Captain of our salvation; and, to the devout mind, the entrance of the literal Israel into the earthly Canaan, is ever a type of the believer's taking possession of the heavenly inheritance. What Moses could not do, Joshua effected. What the law was too weak to accomplish, the Gospel has performed.

Fully to understand the history of Israel, under the Judges, we must bear in mind the altered situation of the people—their condensation in the wilderness—their dissemination through the land of Canaan. Each tribe living apart from the other tribes, and each individual living separate from his neighbours, and solely occupied about his own affairs, it is evident that the reins of government were at once relaxed. There were no civil magistrates apart from the theocracy, and no armed power was ready to enforce prompt obedience. There was no national band, except the national religion; that religion which God had given them, which would have rendered them united and prosperous, but which they liked not to retain, in full supremacy within their minds. Thus, the nation was separated into mere tribes, the tribes were dissolved into families, and “each man did that which was right in his own eyes.” Sins grew and multiplied among the people, punishment overtook their transgressions, and, for a long series of years, they became an easy prey to every partial and every general invader; for we must distinguish with regard to the recorded invasions from which they suffered; some overtook a tribe, and some overwhelmed

the nation. "Then they cried unto God, and he raised up saviours"—temporal deliverers, who shadowed forth the mighty deliverer to come; and not only temporal deliverers, but spiritual teachers, prophets as well as heroes, in a long continued line, but none of them like unto Moses, the legislator; and, therefore, only types of that great prophet, whom Israel was yet to expect.

The remedy for their national want of union was to be united to God; but they longed for the more visible union, and the central force, which was to be obtained by means of an earthly monarchy; and God granted their request, though forewarning them of the result. Even the kings they had thus desired, he made types and examples, both of his divine government, and of his future designs.

David rises as the image of the expected star, attracting the eyes not only of his cotemporaries, but of the nations of the East, in subsequent times, to his wondrous course. He truly deserved the style which the ancient monarchs often affected, of the Shepherd King; the tenderness which he had exercised in cherishing and guarding his flock he brought to the care of his people, and to the guardianship of the prosperity of Israel. His was a heart overflowing with love to God, and love to nature, retaining still the freshness of his early pastoral life, amidst scenes of bloodshed, and the treacherous revolutions of courts. His very religion was prophetic of other days; often exiled from the rites of the Jewish worship, and from the appointed mercy-seat, he could not offer the blood of bulls and goats for the expiation of sin, but he poured forth the sacrifices of a contrite heart. He could not lay his transgressions on the head of the victim, but he poured out his most secret faults into the ear of the All-knowing; and Jehovah, without victim or sacrifice, on the ground of the great atonement, "forgave the iniquity of his sin."

In his inspired odes, David is at once the type of the Saviour, and of the believer; of the believer in all the various affections of the regenerate mind; and of the Saviour, while he acts occasionally as the representative of his great descendant, and shadows out in his person, both the previous sufferings of "the

Man of Sorrows," and the subsequent glories of the Messiah's reign.

Though all the Psalms could scarcely be noticed, even in an ample work upon prophecy, yet several would require an especial attention. We must content ourselves with alluding only to two; the forty-fifth, in which the typical glory of representing the Messiah, passes from the head of David to the head of Solomon, and where the mystical marriage is first brought forward, which is more amply developed in "the Song of Songs." This Psalm forms, therefore, the connecting link between the prophetic history of David and Solomon, and at the same time constitutes a prefatory comment to the typical espousals of the Gentile Church. The seventy-second Psalm, where "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended," affords a fine example of the double sense of prophecy, where part is applicable to Solomon, the immediate Son of David, while in other portions, the most careless must allow, that "a greater than Solomon is here."

Fully to understand the writings of Solomon, his very peculiar character would require to be developed at considerable length. The earliest of his writings, the Song of Songs, is not dissimilar in style from the pastoral beauty of his father's divine odes; and the idea of the shepherd king is finely expressed, intermixed with "that vernal delight," to use Milton's expression, with which the tribes of the East peculiarly regard the time of the flowers, and the copious herbage; and with a frequent reference, in prophetic anticipation, to that universal spring, when "the Spirit from on high shall be poured out" upon us; and all creation, as well as the heart of man, shall shout aloud for joy. All the echoes of nature seem to ring with the voice of the Beloved. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." The long delaying Bride will at last make herself ready; and then, not only Sharon, but the wilderness itself, will rejoice and blossom as the rose.

The Proverbs assume a different, and less poetical character. He who has much desires more; and Solomon, not contented

with the wisdom imparted to him from on high, gathers up the dark sayings of the wise men of old, and collects the intellectual treasures not only of other days, but of other lands. But, though full of human experience, (which, however, still requires the comments of the wisest among interpreters,) the divine and eternal wisdom is not overlooked. Many of the passages are evidently prophetic of him who "spake as never man spake;" and the connexion is firmly established between the Eternal Wisdom in Proverbs, and the Logos of St. John.

Ecclesiastes, like the character and life of Solomon himself, presents many difficulties that are not easily solved. Seeming to contain many exotic terms, it has been attributed by several critics to a later period, and to an author who assumed the character of Solomon. But we should recollect, first, that Hebrew literature is so scanty that many words not found in other writings might be in common use in the days of Solomon; and, secondly, supposing them to be altogether exotic, and aliens from the commonwealth, and common use of Israel, yet that the times of Solomon were precisely those when exotic terms might well be supposed to prevail. Solomon was king, not merely over Israel, but over the surrounding nations; and the occasional use of the language of the vanquished might be one of the trophies of victory; while Solomon, curious of the wisdom of foreign climates, might easily be supposed to have lost somewhat, as is usual, in the purity of speech, the more he gained in foreign acquisitions.

Internal proof is, however, stronger than external objections. Every thing about the work proclaims it the production of Solomon himself. He who forges, forges for an end, and with a purpose; but of all books Ecclesiastes has least of a purpose or an end,—it is Solomon thinking aloud; it is without value, except as the experience of the wisest and most renowned of the kings of the earth. It is Solomon, the object of prophecy, and of the Divine favour, fixing the brand of hopeless vanity upon all the enjoyments of life, and all the prosperities of fortune; it is Solomon proclaiming that "man in his best estate is altogether

vanity"—that the most glorious of types are dark shadows in themselves, and that our true light and life is treasured up only in Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, and the fountain of holy existence.

We "have heard of the afflictions of Job," but his sorrows are not comparable to the gloom that attends the setting of the splendour of Solomon. Adversity admits of cure, it may speedily be removed by prosperity; but what earthly cure does prosperity admit of, with its insatiable longings, and perpetual emptiness? More prosperity could only make it more evident that nothing can satisfy the vast desires of man, or quench his immortal thirst, except the favour of God. To fear Him, and keep his commandments, is the only life worth living for, as it brings us into communion with Him whose smile is peace, and whose benignant presence is life for evermore.

We would add but one word, as a closing moral, on each of the preceding divisions. The Orientals speak of the seal of Solomon with which he controlled the rebel Genii. We have the seal before us, and its inscription. He has inscribed it on all the pursuits and all the attainments of men—"Vanity and vexation of spirit." It were well for us if we could read them there in ever legible characters—the fallen spirits can only tempt us by imaginary representations of a world which will unavoidably disappoint us—did we carry the true seal of Solomon along with us, we should the better be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. If we look to the writings of Solomon, we see nothing but vanity and disappointment. If we look to the still sterner import of the law, we see nothing but condemnation—no precept fulfilled, and a curse attached to every transgression. Thus, vanity written on all objects without us, and condemnation inscribed on whatever passes within; despairing of happiness from the world, and despairing of salvation from ourselves, we are shut up to the Gospel, and prepared for the ready acceptance of a salvation and happiness "without money and without price." As we find rest alone in Jesus, so we find direction and encouragement to abide in him—all the rites of the law, all the

events of history, all the promises and the prophecies centre in him. In him may all our thoughts and affections also centre; greatly may we mourn his absence, highly rejoice in his presence, and find repose in his shadow for evermore.

The times of the declension of Judah and Israel, when the temporal monarchy was sinking, became the period when prophecy disclosed the glories of the spiritual reign of the Messiah. Thus prophecy is often the reverse of what would naturally be the present mood of men's thoughts. The ruins that are multiplying around, only give to it a wider scope, and a larger view into a glorious futurity.

When Isaiah wrote, those empires were already existing that were about to change the face of that portion of the world, with which the Church of God was immediately connected, and to succeed each other, in an uninterrupted series, till the time when the last form of domination should be broken into fragments, by the universal and never ending empire of the Messiah. Had an uninspired writer been describing the political aspect of the times, Nineveh would have occupied the largest share of attention, as the power that was carrying away the ten tribes of Israel, and driving the Jews into their last stronghold of Jerusalem; but the eye of prophecy looks to the future, and, even while celebrating the deliverance from Sennacherib, and the destruction of Nineveh itself, chiefly rests upon Babylon, as the great oppressor of that remnant, from whom Messiah was to spring—the Jews.

The mission of Jonah to Nineveh is peculiar, as destined to preserve, by the preaching of repentance, that city, which was afterwards to prove the destruction of the prophet's nation. Whatever might be the distinctness of his views with regard to futurity, he yet felt the word of the Lord to be a sore burden. Left to his own thoughts, and his own inclinations, the course of the prophet would have been very different. He spake, evidently, not according to his own will, for, unmindful of the words of the Psalmist, he purposed to escape from the presence of the Lord; to flee from the constraining influences of his Spirit, and hide himself from the eye of Jehovah, amid the regions of the

setting sun. It is a remarkable proof how the extremities of the earth were becoming open, that the Tyrians seem to have fixed a regular "fare" between the extreme east and west of the Mediterranean; and that they had no jealous fears with respect to their neighbours the Jews, as being a people not maritime; while they were so guarded in their secrets of navigation towards the Greeks, and other naval powers. Jonah is distinguished among the prophets by the prediction of an event which did not take place; and he is prophetic, without professing to reveal the future, in his prayer for deliverance, wherein from "the depth which closed him round about," he becomes a type not only of the Saviour, but of Christ's body the Church;—a typical relation which still remains expressed in the catacombs of Rome, where the most ancient and rudest attempts at painting recall Jonah, and the time when "the earth with her bars appeared to be about him for ever."

When the Assyrian empire, spared by the repentance which was produced by the preaching of Jonah, had grown up to maturity, and was wasting Israel, and about to vex Judah, Hosea and Isaiah were raised up, contemporary seers, the one to proclaim the fate of the ten, the other of the two tribes. How different their mission, and how different the turn of their minds! The obscure parables of Hosea are often as dark as the destiny of the ten tribes, who still remain undiscovered in the remote east. Yet what glorious bursts of futurity intervene, and vaticinations of a prosperity that have never yet been fulfilled!—And how the style changes when the subject passes from threats to promises, and the poetry becomes clear as the morning, and refreshing as the dew of spring! And though Israel is not yet restored, still the passages which prophesy that restoration, come like a breath of new life over the Church of Christ, as a precious foretaste of the gracious intentions of the Almighty—"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on

to know the Lord : his going forth is prepared as the morning ; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth," Hos. vi. 1-3.

Other prophets have been rapt into future times. Isaiah appears wholly to live in them—his thoughts, his character, his imagery, belong less to the law than to the temper of the Gospel, and to the glory of the latter days. He has justly been named the Fifth Evangelist, and his writings form what the German dreamers would vainly seek for elsewhere, the "proto-evangelion," or primary gospel.

The first chapter of a book in Scripture is not always the first in time, though placed first, as an introduction to the rest. Thus the first psalm may be considered as a preface, placed first, though probably written last. The first chapter of Isaiah forms an introduction to the whole, but the sixth chapter may reasonably be deemed the earliest, as it is the inauguration of Isaiah to the office of evangelical prophet. The death of Uzziah the leper, seems a type of the disappearance of the typical kings, about to make way for him to whom the kingdom belonged. Jehovah himself fills the throne "high and lifted up"—nor human attendants, nor human priests are there, save him, the prophet to be. The seraphim are veiling their faces before the unbearable holiness of Jehovah, in whose sight the heavens are not clean ; and the prophet is convinced of sin, as a type of the whole Church of renovated believers ;—"unclean," and left without excuse, pleading altogether guilty before the just God, and yet the Saviour ;—"undone," as without power and without any way of escape, and thus, shut up by helplessness and despair to the one way alone, of a free, full, and divine salvation. As the Holy Spirit descended in tongues of fire upon the apostles, so Isaiah's lips are touched by a coal from the altar, alike emblematic of that renovating baptism of fire from the Holy Spirit. Thus the whole initiatory scene is in exact accordance with the scope and design of Isaiah's prophecy ; and with the character of that evangelical seer, whose subject is continually the Messianic times, and who often speaks in the character, and as the

representative of the Messiah himself. The summary of the prophecy is contained in the prediction, common both to Isaiah and to Micah, of "the mountain of the Lord's house being established in the top of the mountains." The eminences of earthly dominion are viewed as crumbling away, and the dominion of Jehovah becoming more and more conspicuous, as nation after nation, brought to willing obedience, unite in the fixed purpose of joining themselves to the Lord:—"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob." Multitudes, as the increasing light of the millennial morning rises upon them, are joining heart and hand to serve the Lord, and him only.

How different the mind of a merely good man, like Hezekiah, from that of the inspired prophet. Hezekiah is altogether occupied with the dread of Sennacherib and of Assyria, and rejoices in the friendship of the king of Babylon; Isaiah views the cloud, indeed, coming from Assyria, but regards it as a passing storm—the permanent danger and final ruin of his country he perceives at once to be from Babylon. That queen-like city rises before him continually, sometimes in its glory, sometimes in its desolation; and springing out of the ruins of the first Babylon, he perceives a second and more spiritual tyranny, that shall rivet the thralldom of the spiritual Israel in the latter days. But Isaiah is full of the gospel, and the shadow, by contrast, only gives additional brightness to the times of future prosperity. He dwells still more upon the return from the captivity, than upon the captivity itself. The waste wilderness, which had witnessed the melancholy procession of the captives, shall rejoice and blossom as a rose, when they return, after their seventy years of captivity and exile, to the land of their fathers, and to the worship of their fathers' God. How vast is the mind of prophecy, that after so many ages, and so many accomplishments, so many great events are still behind, to make up the completeness of these ancient predictions! How magnificent the language, but how partial the accomplishment, when the first few and feeble exiles began their return. No new fountains

burst out upon their path, no new created paradises relieved the tedium of their march: though all were invited, the majority preferred the houses they had built, and the gardens they had planted in Babylon, to the voice of the prophet inviting their return to their God; a type of the few who should believe and obey, when "the voice of one crying in the wilderness was heard, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

The second accomplishment of these prophecies, a figurative and spiritual accomplishment, took place, when John the Baptist heralded the Divine Saviour, and when the way of salvation was prepared by that preaching of repentance, which brought the proud Pharisee, and the humbled sinner, alike to an open profession of guilt, and a baptism for the remission of sins. But, a third accomplishment yet remains, when a new influence shall descend from on high, when there shall be a universal pentecost, and a general moral resurrection. Then the fulness of the Gentiles shall pour in continually, like an ever-flowing stream, and the remotest outcasts of Israel shall be gathered. Then shall not only one desert rejoice and blossom as the rose, but every solitary place shall be glad for the universal reign of righteousness, and every wilderness shall become watered, and abundant as the garden of the Lord.

These are three great fulfilments of the predicted return of the children of the captivity, and minor ones might be added,—such, for example, as the return of the Protestants from the thralldom of the spiritual Babylon; but enough is seen, even from the consideration of these three graduated steps, of the successive accomplishments of prophecy, and its perpetual enlargement, as of a river that is growing broader and broader, as it approaches the ocean.

A curious mistake has arisen in the minds of some from not attending to prophecy, and to the nature of its accomplishment. Reading about the merchandise of the later Babylon, and observing that the modern Rome is not a commercial city, they have thought that the denunciations were more applicable to London,

than to the residence of the Popes. Due consideration of how prophecy has been usually fulfilled, would have taken off the edge of this mistake. The first fulfilment, as we have already pointed out, is more strict and literal; the second is enlarged, figurative, and spiritual. The elder Babylon, though it derived its greatness chiefly from agriculture, and irrigation of the immense plains around it, and could not be compared, as a type of commerce with Tyre and the Phœnician cities; was, nevertheless, distinguished not only for its manufactures and arts, but as one of the greatest emporiums, where were exchanged the merchandise of the east and of the west—yet was it less remarkable for its literal merchandise than for its spiritual traffic. It was long a chief centre of false science and false religion; and as such, and as a tyrannical, oppressive power, more even than as distinguished for its wealth and commerce, is it presented to us in the Scriptures. It is according to the usual rule therefore, that, in the second Babylon, the spiritual merchandise should occupy the chief place. It is the capital of a spiritual tyranny, its resources are derived, not from natural opulence, but from the sway that it possesses over the darkened mind; and it is expressly said that her traffic as the crowning instance, consisted in the “bodies and the souls of men;” and the great gain of Rome is, and has been, in the bones and bodies of pretended saints, and in the supposed rescuing of souls from purgatory. If we seek for a prototype of London, we find it, not in Babylon, but in Tyre—and in that city which renewed the fate of Tyre on a larger scale, Carthage. And whatever the guilt of London and of Britain may be, we should find the similarity to Tyre most in those things which are of best promise; in a turning more or less towards the Lord, in its gain becoming “holiness to the Lord;” and in its position, as “the covering cherub.” As Tyre by its fleets guarded the coasts of Palestine from invasion—so England, by its naval resources, has often been a covering and a protection to the cause of humanity and of religion. Would it were more so!

A very distinguishing part of the prophecy of Isaiah, is that

which relates to the suffering Messiah. It is not poetical, as prophecy in general is, it is almost plain narrative—it stands alone and apart. Here there could be no double sense—the Messiah was to suffer *once*, in the fulness of times; and to “bring in an *everlasting* righteousness;” there is, therefore, not that amplitude required which, in other prophecies, embraces, in its expanding imagery, two or three remote events, and which demands both a literal and a spiritual fulfilment. The letter and the spirit are here the same—the language is as depressed and plain as is the subject of it. “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.”

Though the same scene rises up continually throughout Isaiah, Babylon in splendour, and Babylon in ruins—the return through the wilderness—the presence and the glory of Jehovah—the way of God as the Saviour of his people—the feast spread for all nations, and the universal restoration; yet the prophecy becomes still more deeply evangelical from the fortieth chapter, where God’s people are especially called upon to be comforted with the glory of the Lord, which is about to be revealed to all flesh—where the breath of the Spirit of life is promised in abundant measure—and where the revival upon revival, of God’s people, is pointed out, in the gracious assurance, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not be faint.”

Towards the sixtieth chapter there breaks out, in addition, the ascending light of the millennial day:—“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” And, in the sixty-first chapter, the large effusion of the Spirit is noted, as accompanying the general acceptance of the Gospel:—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek,” &c. The Spirit first resting, typically, upon the prophet, as the represen-

tative of the Messiah ; then, in infinite fulness, upon the Messiah himself ; and, lastly, flowing from the head to the members of Christ's mystical body, like the typical ointment on the head of Aaron, " that went down to the skirts of his garments ; as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion : for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

In the sixty-second chapter, we have, in consequence of the general effusion of the Spirit, the unceasing prayer of the latter days ; which will both bring in the universal reign of Christ, and retain it after it is brought in :—" For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." And, in conclusion, the final accomplishment of that blessedness for which " the whole creation has been groaning, and travailing in pain together, until now." " Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her : rejoice with joy with her, all ye that mourn for her : that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory."

Jeremiah may be represented as the counterpart of Isaiah ; and his prophecies, as making up the complement of that which is more lightly touched upon in the writings of his predecessor. Jeremiah is eminently, himself, " the man of sorrows"—the burden of his nation is laid upon him ; he is a type of the suffering Messiah ; overwhelmed, as he is, with the intensity of the woes he is compelled to denounce ; while Isaiah enlarges most on the glories that should follow those temporary sufferings. The glories, in Scripture, are first unfolded, for it is to obtain them that the sufferings are undergone. Victory is placed first, before the mind of the soldier, though the battle must precede the triumphs that are to be won. God wills not prematurely to discourage his people, and on this account, the sufferings, both of the head and of the members, are reserved for the background, while the glorious issue is ever kept in view. When

the Saviour came, the expectants of the Messiah were "waiting for the redemption of Israel," and to them he gradually and slowly unveiled the sufferings which must precede his conquests; and testified, that the garments of his triumph must be previously stained by the blood of the victor.

"The Lamentations of Jeremiah" are the most beautiful of elegies; not for the death of an individual only, but for the loss of a nation. And these lamentations, we find, already commenced, in his prophecy, by the seer; who, beholding the future as if present, while all was yet in silent expectation, heard "the alarm of war," and saw the unsheathing of the sword of vengeance. The representative system of prophecy, where the prophet acts that which is about to come to pass, is largely exemplified both in Ezekiel and Jeremiah. The nature of man is in some degree prophetic. From the foresight with which God has endowed him, he feels, before he actually suffers; but Jeremiah had to drink twice of the bitter cup of misery, carried by the prophetic spirit into the midst of future desolations, while the feast and the song were still resounding in the palaces of the Princes of Judah. And, let it be borne in mind, the writings of Jeremiah are not an elegy for Jerusalem alone, but a voice of lamentation for all nations, who, "except they repent, must all likewise perish." "For thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me, Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it." And not those nations alone, to whom Jeremiah was particularly sent, have drunk of it; but, nation after nation, who have disregarded the warning, have had, at this fearful feast of retribution, to raise the bitter chalice to their lips, and "to drink of the wine of astonishment"—the cup of intoxication, as well as of destruction; for how utterly have they been deprived of sense, as well as of power, when the black clouds of vengeance were gathering over their temples and towers!

Some bright passages, however, occur in Jeremiah, in the midst of so much gloom; like the bursting out of the sun, at the close of a cloudy day. As, for example, in the thirtieth chapter,

“Lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord : and I will cause them to return to the land which I gave their fathers, and they shall possess it ;” including also that reviving promise which unites the resurrection of the individual, with the resurrection of the nation. “A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping ; Rachel weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.” “Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears : for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord ; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.” A passage which marks well the reiterated accomplishments of prophecy, being applied, in the New Testament, to the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem ; for whom, dying as they did for the Messiah, their relatives might well sorrow in hope ; but which, having likewise had a partial fulfilment, in the first return from Babylon, will have a more complete realization in the restoration of the latter days, when there shall be, as it were, “life from the dead ;” and a full, and final accomplishment, in the general resurrection of all Christ’s elect. Thus, in Jeremiah, as in all the other prophecies, there are reduplicated accomplishments, both of the fall of Babylon, and the restoration of Israel.

In approaching Ezekiel we come to one of the most difficult portions of Scripture. Ezekiel and Zechariah are the two prophets that most require an interpreter, we might almost say an inspired interpreter ; but it is good for us sometimes, when we have come to the narrow bounds of our limited understanding, to pause awhile, and to gaze beyond us, like the first navigators, who attempted to win their way to new discoveries, upon the ocean of darkness that lay untracked beyond them. An inspired interpreter we have, however, to a certain extent, in the Apocalypse, which carries on the topics these ancient prophets dwelt upon, and extends their imagery to future events. There is generally some one point of view which brings the most com-

plicated subjects more within our narrow range of vision. Thus, it assists our conception of the temple of Ezekiel, to consider its shadowing gorgeous outlines; not built upon the earth, but imaged against the sky; as the temple of transition; the passage to a greater temple, and to a heavenly worship. The temple made with hands, had been destroyed by the hand of the enemy; the inner sanctuary in ruins, is revealed to the light of day; but the symbolical representations have not perished—they have only become more expanded, and less earthly. The little cherubim, of the small mercy-seat, have become the amazing vision of Ezekiel. Not surrounded alone by the cloud that rested upon the tabernacle, they are in the midst of whirlwinds, and thick darkness, and the flashes of continual lightning. No longer stationary, they are accompanied by wheels, as it were “a wheel in the midst of a wheel,” “and as for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful;” “and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.”

It is here necessary to remark, that prophecy, having two senses, the literal and the spiritual, it is sometimes not fully accomplished in the first sense; partly from the design of God, partly from unbelief on the part of man; in order that the mind, from the incompleteness of the first fulfilment, may be carried to the fulness of the latter, which can never fail, because it belongs to the elect of God, and is the prime intention of the Author of Inspiration. Canaan was given to Israel, but on the condition of all God's gifts—that of faith. Israel, from unbelief, did not take full possession till the late period of David and of Solomon. This very incompleteness led to the highest conclusion, and to the blissful certainty, since God's word cannot fall to the ground, that “a rest remaineth to the people of God;” and that the Divine promises chiefly regard the Heavenly Canaan.

All Judah and all Israel were invited to return from Babylon, and the countries of the North. Had they accepted the invitation, as a complete nation, and not as a mere remnant, we see, in Ezekiel, the ample provision that God would have made for them; a noble kingdom, and a glorious temple. But un-

belief again presented a striking difference between the performance and the promise; again, "they were not able to enter in because of unbelief." The literal fulfilment is marred, and the mind is led forward to the full and spiritual accomplishment in the latter days.

It is not unlikely that the Jews will attempt to build the temple of Ezekiel, when it is too late, as they sought to enter Canaan when the Divine presence had been withdrawn from their banners. It is too late; it would require a new revelation now to understand the architectural terms. It is too late; the typical sacrifices are accomplished, and therefore abolished. A temple with sacrifices now, would be the most daring denial, (in the sight of Jehovah, and with a direct appeal to him,) of the all-sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, and of the efficacy of the blood of his atonement. He who sacrificed before, confessed the Messiah; he who sacrifices now, most solemnly and sacrilegiously denies him. Long has that word been fulfilled of the prophet Isaiah, "He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol."

The latter chapters of Ezekiel, like those of Isaiah, seem full of reference to the latter-day of glory. The resurrection of the dry bones, in the thirty-seventh chapter, corresponds with the "life from the dead," spoken of by the Apostle Paul, in the eleventh chapter of the Romans; while the waters of the sanctuary, in their rapid expansion, mark the effect of that general influence of the Spirit by which the dead are raised to life, by which "a nation shall be born in a day," and the earth shall suddenly become "full of the knowledge of the Lord." But the change, though sudden at the last, was gradual at its commencement; and the whole work had its beginning in the voice of the prophet, as the representative of the Church, calling for the mighty influences of the Spirit of life. And here, Ezekiel is but the precursor of the people of God in the latter days, in which multitudes will take up the prayer that was first uttered

by the prophet in the Valley of Vision,—“Then said he unto me, ‘Prophecy unto the wind; prophesy, son of man, and say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.’”

Prayer is the law of the kingdom. All good things begin in prayer, and end in praise. When the Spirit of God commences a divine work upon the earth, he moves first his own peculiar abodes, his living temples, the hearts of his children. Called upon to be fellow-workers with the Deity, and to share in the divine councils; the movements of the new creation, which have their origin in heaven, among the hallelujahs of the angels, find their seat, first on earth, in the renovated breast. Do ye expect great and beneficial changes? Look neither to the east, nor to the west, ye believers in Jesus, the kingdom of God is not without you, but within you. It cometh, therefore, not, in the first place, with outward observation, but with inward demonstration of the spirit and of power. “Ask and ye shall receive.” Ask much, and ye shall receive much. Pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without doubting. Pray for all things, at all times; and universal prayer is the commencement of Christ’s universal reign.

After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, the Jews had to undergo a second bondage, and were brought in contact with another, though similar form of heathen learning, which greatly influenced the nation; not directly, (as Egypt did, through some of the institutions given by Moses;) but, indirectly, and unsanctioned by divine authority, by means of the interpretations and fables of the Rabbins. Through the overruling of Divine Providence, the Jews had an unwonted access to the mysteries of antiquity, both Moses and Daniel having been adopted, and becoming naturalized in Egypt and in Chaldaea. Both of them are far higher authorities than any others which yet remain, for the institutions with which they came in contact; both being familiar with the language, and conversant with the usages of the countries in which they sojourned;

both, probably, having a share in the government; and each thoroughly instructed, the one in the lore of the Egyptians, the other of the Babylonians.

The Greeks give us frequent examples of how imperfectly they were acquainted even with the leading outlines of the history of the nations with whom they had the most to do. How different is the account of the end of Cyrus in Xenophon, and in Herodotus! We may safely prefer that account which is the most agreeable to the impression which the Scriptures give us, even when they do not bear direct testimony to the subject in dispute. For instance, we may assert, in opposition to Herodotus, and in accordance with Xenophon, that the end of Cyrus was peaceful and glorious, agreeable to the character of him, who was typically the elect of Jehovah, and was to be rewarded in this life for his executing the Divine purposes. His expedition to Scythia, we may affirm to have been successful, and that it was so, may be deduced from remote, yet certain considerations. Darius, the restorer of the Persian monarchy, was the imitator, and desired to be the rival of Cyrus. Assuredly, then, he would imitate him only in that which was prosperous and glorious. The expedition of Cyrus against the Scythians in Asia must have been successful; so successful as to keep that frontier quiet, even during the troubles of Persia, otherwise Darius would never have carried his arms against the European Scythians; an uncalled for, and ill-planned expedition, but from which he hoped to reap a similar renown. Another indirect but conclusive proof of the success of Cyrus was, that he left a smaller and frontier kingdom to his younger son. Clearly, then, the Scythians had not resisted the arms of the whole empire, when a portion of it, set apart as a frontier sovereignty, was thought sufficient to restrain them.

Another question arises from the discrepancy of the Greek historians; by what means did Cyrus succeed to the empire of the Medes and Persians? By arms, or by peaceful succession? By peaceful succession, we should answer, as evidenced by the footing on which the Medes and Persians continued together,

through the duration of the empire; the Medes remaining, not as subjects, but co-partners; though, sometimes, repining co-partners, of the sovereignty; because, the chief glory and influence had passed to the Persians, from the supremacy and generalship of their fellow-countryman, Cyrus; and this is clearly shewn in Daniel, where Cyrus does not succeed immediately to his grandfather; far less had he wrested the authority from him; but he remains conjoined, after his grandfather's death, with his uncle, as his recognised elder and superior; and, though he might possess the real power, from possessing command of the army, yet he becomes, nominally, sole sovereign, only at his uncle's death.

Descending into the tombs of ancient Egypt, the traveller becomes intimately acquainted with the buried life of the Egyptians; which, as if in accordance with their belief in the "Palingenesia," has been marvellously restored from darkness and obscurity after the lapse of three thousand years. We have not sanguine hopes of becoming as intimately acquainted with the more recent nations, the later Assyrians, and the Babylonians, yet much may be effected towards this object, if the discoveries of Layard and others are diligently pursued; and we have every interest that the search should be thoroughly prosecuted, both for the renown of Britain, and, still more, for the illustration of the truth. The more successful these researches, the more, we feel convinced, will be shown the intimate acquaintance of Daniel with that perished life of the Chaldeans, which became extinct with their empire, their learning, and their temples.

How many splendid dreams of the Chaldean sages have passed away, while the contemporary dream of Nebuchadnezzar alone remains behind! Naturally, in tracing the course of empire, the description would have commenced with the Assyrian monarchy, of which Babylon was, in many respects, the continuation. But the aspect of prophecy is, in general, turned only, through the present, to the future. It is occupied with the things that be, and with the things that shall be; and with present time, chiefly as the gate of futurity.

That dream of Nebuchadnezzar has passed from prophecy to history, and many of its expressions are caught up, unconsciously, by the infidel, as well as the believer. How often has this prediction been reproduced in human affairs! The statue of Nebuchadnezzar is political as well as prophetic. From the neglect of the lower classes, and their want of education and moral principle, the head of gold, in nation after nation, has rested upon feet of iron and of clay. And, from the insecurity of the basis, power, riches, and splendour have again and again crumbled into ruins! It is the commonplace of history. But not only are the gold, the silver, the brass, and the iron, but even the toes of iron and clay, become the common stock of writers, so that Machiavel sums up the kingdoms of the Roman Empire as ten, though the enumeration is not obvious; and the exact list of the ten nations continually varies in different writers.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar has the advantage of a commentary, in the co-incident vision of Daniel. Then first appears that little horn, rising behind the ten kingdoms, and displacing three of them, which occupies so large a space in subsequent prophecy. A domination that was not disclosed to Nebuchadnezzar, "diverse" from any that he contemplated; insignificant as a temporal power, but which, as a fearful spiritual tyranny, opposed to the kingdom of the saints, and the reign of Heaven in the latter-day glory, strongly attracted the attention of the prophet. "As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me, but I kept the matter in my heart."

A great change was about to take place in the Church of God, —the long line of prophets was soon to cease; the living voice to be silent, and the written documents alone to remain, till the Messiah himself should come. Formerly, with each great occurrence came a new message from the Almighty; but now, the only resource is to open the prophetic books, and to see what was written beforehand, concerning the events passing around. Daniel, perplexed and prayerful himself, and consulting "books," especially Jeremiah, with regard to the restoration of Israel, was

to become, when Israel was restored, the guide of his people in those dark dispensations, by which they were so severely tried, when they were vexed by the Syrian kings, before God raised up the Maccabees as deliverers; like those ancient saviours whom he had brought forth in the time of the Judges. A considerable degree of the obscurity which attaches, not to Daniel, so much as to those who attempt to explain it, proceeds from their not taking it in this point of view. It is often overlooked, that those prophecies of Daniel which seem so dark when applied to the future, have already been accomplished. They were the hand-book of Israel during the wars of "the Kings of the North and of the South," denominations that would have a vague value; if applied to the world in general, but which were too well felt and understood in the land of Palestine, the debatable ground, in all the struggles between the Macedonian kings of Syria and of Egypt. One unexpected difficulty arises here. Prophecy is more full than history, as Porphyry the infidel has, with no friendly intention, remarked. There are incidents contained in Daniel which have been overlooked in profane story, or probably lost, as fragments of the histories of those times have alone survived. And it is a remarkable circumstance, that the infidel, here, proves the best commentator. St. Jerome and others confess this, by following in the steps of Porphyry; mistaken only in one point, namely, when he asserts, that the prophecy of Daniel was written after the events; which opinion he expects to establish by the minuteness of the prophecy. In other respects, he appears a most faithful expounder, and such an one as we would greatly desire that God should raise up, with a Christian spirit, in these our latter days. As it is, a large and complete work on prophecy will have to re-write, in a concise form, the border wars of Syria and of Egypt; using the help of Porphyry, as of a skilful and accomplished guide; living not very distant in time, and near in place, to the scenes and events to which he bears witness.

It is to be regretted that the Christians break off from Porphyry, when they come to the period of Antiochus Epiphanes;

and that, not owing to any fault of Porphyry, but to the Christian writers not understanding the general structure of prophecy. Porphyry interprets of Antiochus Epiphanes what the Christians apply to Antichrist. The double interpretation of prophecy reconciles both. Antiochus is the literal type of Antichrist, a personal Antichrist, the heat of whose tyranny endures for three years and a half. Many seek for a personal Antichrist, and for a literal period of three years and a half. If they read history and prophecy right, they would see, that the literal Antichrist they seek has already come, but there remains a spiritual and extended sense, to this, as to the other prophecies. Long after Antiochus Epiphanes had passed away, the little horn—the spiritual tyranny—was to arise, and was to endure for the mystical period of 1260 years. The two accomplishments do not oppose, but support each other, and Porphyry and Jerome, on this subject, may join hands.

Beyond those times “shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even till that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” It is evident that this passage must also have a double accomplishment, in the first and second advent of the Messiah; and in the first and second resurrection; otherwise there would be a great gap in the prophecy. But these two fulfilments, the coming of Christ in the flesh, and his advent to judgment, being both included, the whole subject proceeds continuously, to “the time of the end.”

In so short a sketch, we are compelled to leave aside the consideration of many of the minor prophets. In a larger work, we would naturally weigh the genius and scope of each; or, if that should encumber the arrangement of the main design, by too

much minuteness; we would at least endeavour to collect their separate lights, like constellations, combined with the principal stars. Still more, the view would rest upon, what we would call, the Autumnal Song of Prophecy; the partial revival of notes that were heard in better days, in vernal times; the transient renewal of prophecy after the return from Babylon; when the Jews, no longer speaking their original tongue, the muse of prophecy still breathed, through what was scarcely a living language, some prelusive notes of the advent of the Great Deliverer, till she was hushed into an expressive silence; and no appeal remained but to the written documents. Under these circumstances, the question of Zechariah had a peculiar import,—"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" The prophets were about to cease, but the words which they had spoken, were taking hold of each generation, as it passed through this transitory scene. The prophets no longer spoke, but events were speaking for them; and the old visions that had filled the minds of the seers, were in succession becoming outward realities, overturning thrones and sceptres, and changing the face of the world.

Before the voice of prophecy ceased, how deep were its brief oracles! In Haggai, how pathetic is the first view, and how sublime the last! "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory; and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" But again, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." And then the glorious and concluding declaration of Malachi, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings;" with that remarkable prediction, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;" a prediction which, previous to the event, we should have judged would have been literally fulfilled in the return of Elijah, so miraculously preserved from

dying ; but no. Elijah came not—only one equally remarkable came, “in the spirit and power of Elijah.” We have our Saviour’s express word for the fulfilment of this prediction in the person of John the Baptist. Yet, such is the obstinacy of adhering to a favourite system, that, in spite of our Saviour’s testimony, some literalists are still expecting the return of Elijah !

The Books of Zechariah and Ezekiel, we have already mentioned, as being among the most difficult portions of Scripture ; and both of them would require prolonged consideration, in a complete work upon prophecy. Where the difficulty is great, the helps are proportioned ; for the references to both are peculiarly numerous in the New Testament, and especially in the Apocalypse of St. John. But, these references, to do full justice to them, would require to be detailed, and do not admit of a succinct abridgment. A remark, which applies also to a most important subject—the Divine interpretation of Old Testament prophecy in the New Testament ; where the Holy Spirit, the author of the prophecy under the old dispensation, gives the inspired interpretation in the new. And this would indeed be a delightful part of a work upon prophecy, where, under the express teaching of the Spirit, the mind would find its perfect repose.

Controversy, to a right mind, is always unpleasant, and rarely profitable ; yet it is sometimes necessary, and that necessity is its best excuse. When we dwell upon truth alone, we hold converse with God, and with his Spirit. When we deal with error, we turn to man, and to man not in his best estate. Therefore, considering how the life of man is subject to evils, and his mind to darkness, we should turn to God, with the greater earnestness of prayer ; that he may deliver us from all evil and error, and cause the light of his countenance to shine upon us for evermore.

The pre-millennial, personal reign, of the Messiah upon earth, during a thousand years, was, in the first instance, derived from the Rabbins, and from Jewish traditions. The Jews, on the

authority of their own imagination, for they evidently had not Scripture warrant, but only a supposed analogy; held, that the world would endure for seven thousand years. Of these, before our Christian era, six thousand were nearly passed, according to the longer computation, (for opinions varied respecting the age of the world, and manuscripts differed as to numerical expressions;) and thus, the approaching seventh thousand was expected by the Jews to be a Sabbatical period, when the Messiah would judge the nations; and the earth would be suffered to remain, in untilled, and Sabbatic repose. These, therefore, are the three elements of the Rabbinical millennium: the earth waste—the nations judged—the Messiah reigning, with the elect of Israel. These opinions greatly prevailed everywhere. In the New Testament, we find expectations of the end of the then existing state of the world; and these expectations were shared by the Christians, as well as by the Jews. Nor, even when Jerusalem had been destroyed, without any visible appearance of the Saviour coming in person to judgment, was the general confidence in these opinions shaken. The state of the Jewish mind naturally led their Rabbins to look for a triumphant Messiah, and to reject a suffering Christ; hence their great controversy with the Gospel. In the same opinion the Jews continue still; and, if we adopt the pre-millennial views, we must conclude, that God is about to concede to them, since they will not yield to him; and, that unbroken by the judgments of God, and unhumbled by ages of adversity, their proud and unregenerate hearts are about to be gratified, by receiving the Messiah, in the very manner which their carnal blindness has so long prescribed to the Almighty! An intelligent Jew was some time ago expressing his belief that both Christians and Jews would soon be of the same mind; and, when asked if the Jews were becoming more favourable to Christianity, he answered, “Certainly not;” but implied, by his smile, that some Christians, in their views of prophecy, were rapidly approaching the Jewish standard. We believe, if the Judaical origin, and Rabbinical character, of many of these speculations were duly considered,

this, of itself, would decide the value of such interpretations of prophecy.

The great decision, however, must rest upon the declarations of Scripture. We confess, that had we lived before the apostolical writings, which disclose the long continuance of the great apostasy; we should, along with the majority of Christians, in those days, have strongly expected that Christ would have appeared in person to judge Jerusalem; and, that to the destruction of Jerusalem, would have succeeded, without delay, the judgment both of the quick and of the dead. We should have expected it, after the death of Peter, but before the natural close of St. John's life. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." "Then went this saying among the brethren, that that disciple should not die." An opinion, in which we should naturally have partaken, and which would have been greatly confirmed by the expression of St. Paul in 1 Thess. iv. 15, "*We* which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord;" till warned by himself, "That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." As much, perhaps more, might have been said for the personal appearance of Christ to judge Jerusalem, than for his coming in person to judge Babylon; there is a similarity in language with regard to both, and the same prophecies may be applied directly, or indirectly, to both. Having to interpret the expressions, not in a literal but a spiritual sense, to the one; we are led, by a parity of reason, and by Scripture analogy, to interpret them in like manner as to the other.

But the change from Judaism to Christianity was great; it was also to be the last change. The times of Christianity were therefore called, "the last times," not because its conclusion was near its commencement; but, because these times were to endure to the end of the world. The change from Judaism to Christianity was from an earthly to a heavenly worship; from a temple built by man, to a temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; from high priests on earth, to an immortal

priest, with an unchangeable priesthood, which commenced and continued with his presence in the heavenly temple; "for, had he been on earth, he would not have been a priest." Now all God's proceedings are expanding, and rising from earth to heaven. To bring back the "High Priest of our profession" to the earth, would be counter to all the Divine proceedings; would cause the Divine designs to flow backwards, and be a returning to carnal ordinances, and a visible worship, after being made complete by faith, and in the Spirit. All things in the earthly worship were made conformable to the heavenly patterns, and had a reference to their completion and significance in a higher sphere. How were it possible to bring the substance back to the shadow, and to leave the heavenly sanctuary, without a service—a sacrifice—and a priest—in order to accommodate religion to a mere carnal fancy, and the prophecies to a literal interpretation?

Again, the reason of Christ's leaving his disciples was twofold. First, it was a higher stage of the spiritual life, to walk by faith, and not by sight. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." And, as the second reason, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The Holy Spirit is given in answer to prayer—specially in answer to united prayer—and most of all to the prayer of the Church on earth, uniting with the intercession of the great high priest, in the heavenly temple. This reason for Christ's absence continues and increases. If it were necessary that he should leave his disciples, in order that the first-fruits of the Spirit should be poured out upon them, on the day of Pentecost; still greater reason is there, that he should be interceding at God's right hand, when the fulness of the Spirit shall be poured out, and all over the world there should be, as it were, "life from the dead." These simple observations we would consider as conclusive. It is not the duty of the believer to decide anything

before the Lord's time, and before the manifestation of God's purposes, by the event. It is sufficient to point out, that those views which would prescribe, beforehand, the mode of God's accomplishing his predictions, have no countenance either from analogy, or from Scripture.

We may observe, farther, as indirectly bearing upon the subject, that they who greatly contend for Christ's personal reign, have not sufficiently considered the effect which his glorified appearance produced upon his apostles; who, instead of being able to gaze upon that glory, fell upon their faces; and, Peter spake, not knowing what he said. Nor was the apostle John, "in the spirit," more able to sustain the glorified manifestation of the Son of man, though he was the beloved disciple who had leaned on Jesus' bosom. "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."

Another consideration is this; the natural is gradual, "*nihil per saltum*;" the supernatural is instantaneous. Lazarus did not make a gradual recovery, when raised from the dead. In this view, an observation on the graduated scale of prophetic numbers, in Daniel, will perhaps suggest conclusive reflections. The prophetic period for the duration of the great apostasy, was twelve hundred and sixty years; but, another period is mentioned, "there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days;" and, again another period, "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." Such periods we should naturally expect, in the gradual course of events, between the fall of error, and the filling of the world with the knowledge of the Lord; but they appear quite inconsistent with a sudden and instantaneous change. All power is of God; miracles and the laws of nature are equally the operation of His hands. There is this difference, however, proceeding from the nature of each, that a miracle is transitory, and that a law is lasting. A prolonged miracle is an absurdity; its prolongation is suicidal. Having proved the Divine intervention, it gives way to the ordinary course of Providence. The carnal and literal millennium of the Pabbins, would be a miracle,

prolonged for a thousand years—an anomaly—standing apart from the life of faith, and from the ordinary dealings of God with man; while the spiritual millennium is at once the nature of nature, and the fulness of Scriptures; bringing nature back to the point from whence sin caused it to swerve; and being not the accomplishment of a few predictions only, but of all the predictions—that sea of glory in which all the prophecies terminate their course.

A large work on the prophecies would dwell, with minuteness and profit, on our Saviour's prediction regarding the destruction of the temple and the desolation of Jerusalem, as connected with the end of the world. The two temples brought together—the ever-living temple, Jesus himself; “Destroy this temple, and I will build it up again in three days.” On the other hand, let that temple of stone be destroyed, and “there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” Also these three questions of the disciples—The time, when?—the sign of thy coming?—and, the end of the world?—compared with the answers. A veil suffered to remain over the exact time—that fruitless object of ever-recurring inquiry! But, the signs and forewarnings of future judgment ever reproducing themselves;—false teachers, and the shaking of men's hold of the truth. The under-ground swells that preceded the political earthquake, and the shaking of the nations, previous to their being shaken to pieces; and, “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.” And this, at the very moment when faith, hope, and love, ought to have been in the highest exercise, seeing that the previous trial of the patience of the saints is well-nigh over, and that “the Judge standeth at the door.” “When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains.” It was not till the Christians saw the Roman ensigns brought to the gates of Jerusalem, that they received a precise answer to the question, “when shall these things be?” after a lapse of about forty years.

In regard to "the abomination of desolation," we have another remarkable instance of the reiterated fulfilment of prophecy. It was first accomplished, when Antiochus introduced his idols into Jerusalem; then, when Cestius brought the Roman ensigns to the gates; and, lastly, when the Mahometan ensigns, not like the two former, simply idolatrous, but at once anti-idolatrous, and anti-christian, took possession of the holy city, that it might be trodden down of the Gentiles for 1260 years. We have also, in this prophecy, a striking example, how predictions, which begin with the first and figurative coming to judgment; may include a line of vision, extending to other preliminary judgments, and concluding with the final judgment; when "the Son of man shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The whole, interspersed, with repeated observations, that preclude all expectation of ascertaining, beforehand, the precise day and hour of judgment—the very subject on which interpreters expend so vainly, so much time and thought! "But of that day and hour knoweth no man—no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only;" and, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord will come;" and again, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as YE THINK NOT, the Son of man cometh."

As they who were in expectation of the advent of the Messiah, overlooked his sufferings, which were previously to be undergone, and expected his immediate glory—so, they who looked to the exaltation of the Church of Christ, were not sufficiently aware that the body, the Church, must be conformed to its head; and must undergo a long previous depression, before it should attain to its final glorification. Prophecy, as we have remarked before, presents a rising scale of elevations, one accomplishment towering above another, as the vast designs of the Almighty are unfolded to the view. Thus, in regarding an extensive range of mountain scenery, the summits strike our eyes, but not the deep valleys of humiliation and obscurity, which often intervene.

The old prophets had spoken more transiently of the spiritual tyranny which was to arise in the latter days; more largely of the everlasting kingdom which was to be given to the saints. It was more peculiarly the office of New Testament prophecy, as the times were approaching, to enter fully into the nature, extent, and duration of the great apostasy of the latter days. The expectation of the speedy advent of Christ to judgment, by the Thessalonians, who considered their opinions strengthened by the expressions of St. Paul, in his first letter; led to his reiteration, in his second letter, of what he had previously spoken to them. "Remember ye not, that while I was yet with you, I told you these things?" "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." It was mournful that there should be a general falling away; but, still more grievous, that a spiritual tyranny, the little horn "having eyes, like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things," should usurp the throne and temple of God, in the Church of Christ; and supersede the divine word, and the authority of the Saviour. We have here, striking characteristics given of the anti-christian power, false miracles, "He whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders;" and, also, the relation marked, between the heathen Roman Empire, and the new spiritual tyranny—that, the first must be taken away, before there was room for the exercise of the latter. And this political person is named "the man of sin," as breaking by his own laws, the laws established by God. To these marks, we have the addition, in Timothy, that the departure from the faith should be accompanied by the introduction of "doctrines of devils," or rather of demons; that is, the souls of dead men acting as mediators between man and God; coupled with the Gnostic asceticism of "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats;" and similar errors are pre-

dicted in the Colossians, of "a voluntary humility, and a worshipping of angels." Of these prophecies, there was a preliminary accomplishment, in the case of the Gnostics; but a complete fulfilment, in the great apostasy of Popery—and, the coincidence between Gnosticism and Popery is the more remarkable, as the Church of Rome was always professedly opposed to Gnosticism; but, extending her arms to receive accessions from every quarter, she, unwittingly, received into her bosom the seeds of every prevailing error.

The source of all these errors springs from not "holding the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." The Christian life consists in our living, to Christ, by Christ, in Christ. If our clear view of Christ be interrupted, he appears to recede into the distance, and we have no longer the same confidence of access to God through him. Love, first, waxes cold; and then, the understanding becomes clouded; for love and light in the Christian life are closely connected; and we have no clear or permanent understanding of the gospel truth, except through the indwelling and constant teaching of the Spirit of Christ: "If a man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Christ alone reveals to us the Father; and if Christ ceases to manifest himself clearly and fully to our souls, the Father again seems to retire into the immensity of the Divine perfections—no longer our Father, but shrouded in light unapproachable; and Christ appears rather as the Judge of the world, than as the Saviour of our souls. Such is the backward process, that still leads away from the truth, and which led to the great apostasy. While we live on the mediation of the one great Mediator, we need nothing more, and our souls are in perfect repose; but the union and communion with Jesus being interrupted, men accepted the aid of imaginary mediators, once sinners like themselves, but now supposed to be favourites of heaven, in order to fill up that chasm between God and the soul, which their falling away from the divine life had occasioned.

The last portion of Scripture that remains to be considered, is the Apocalypse of St. John—which seals up the sum of inspiration, and guards the book of life, upon every side; with a blessing upon him who observes all the truths it contains, and a curse upon those who either add to, or diminish therefrom.

Scripture was written at sundry times, and in divers manners; by men of different ages, and of various minds; yet, amid their characteristic diversities, agreeing, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in one full and harmonious result. As one star differeth from another in glory, so among these lights of the world, a few take the first place. Moses, David, and Isaiah, impress the deepest stamp, amongst those who are cast into the mould of the Old Testament; and the writings of Paul and John are most conspicuous and characteristic in the New. Paul excels in the energy of the intellect; John in the calm intensity of love. In Paul we see two styles; a style rivalling the Classic models of antiquity, when in a formal speech he addresses a Grecian, and above all an Athenian audience. Another style when, “a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” he pierces into the depths of the ancient Scriptures, piles arguments upon arguments, and springs from conclusion to conclusion. The narrative of St. John, on ordinary topics, is clear, simple, and pellucid, like the purest and gentlest river; and when he ascends to heights, at the very highest elevation which the understanding of man can reach, his style still preserves its usual calmness; the stream is increased to a depth that can scarcely be fathomed, but the surface still preserves its smoothness, and is waveless, like the sea of glass before the throne of God. The mind of Paul is rapid as the lightning, and yet strikes, with its zig-zag impetuosity, every projecting point that approaches its path, and still, undelayed by these deflections, attains instantaneously the goal. The mind of John is like the diffused light of the noon-day, and cloudless heaven, uniting ineffable splendour, with the deepest repose.

The structure of the prophecy of John, though more complicated from the variety of topics introduced, is yet, in its leading outline, distinguished for simplicity. The Isle of Patmos first

appears, with its barren rocks, and desert waves, where there is little to distract the thoughts of the exile from the clouds of heaven, and the remembrance of him, who shall one day return in them. But suddenly he enjoys the fulness of a Christian Sabbath: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The waste of waters and of rocks are filled with the emblematic scenery of heaven, and of futurity; and, "the desolation in the midst of the sea," is illuminated by the presence of the glorified Redeemer, and the ministering angels.

The subject of the book is briefly stated, "The things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." The Omniscient alone both reads the heart, and pierces into the secrets of futurity. The same infinite mind is required for both. The authenticity of an apostolic epistle was tested by its being preserved in an Apostolic Church. Here are seven Churches attesting the Revelation of St. John; and that, not as witnessing the apostle's hand-writing alone, but from the state of their own hearts being revealed; and from the providences of God gradually fulfilled with respect to them, correspondent to their spiritual condition.

As the state of seven principal Churches is made manifest in the second and third chapters, so, in the fourth and fifth, "a door is opened in heaven," and the Celestial Church and Temple is disclosed to the view; and as the changes in the visible and lower heavens begin in the higher regions, the clouds and the storms having their origin higher than man's observation reaches, so, all the changes upon earth are represented as having their first commencement, and moving causes, in "the Heaven of heavens;" and not till the impulse is thence communicated, do the revolutions and mutations occur upon this lower world. Not till the Lamb opened one of the seals, did a great movement take place in the Roman Empire. The Lamb opens the seals; the government of the Church and of the world is alike on his shoulders; and all things are ordered according to the good pleasure of his will.

The order of events is simple; the seventh seal includes the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet the seven vials. The

seals contain the destruction of the Roman Pagan empire—the trumpets, the destruction of the Roman Pseudo-Christian empire—and the vials, the destruction of the Roman Papal empire; which destruction of the persecuting power, in its last form, brings in, the universal reign of the Messiah. If anything appears complicated, it is the attaching appendices to each of these, which enlarge more fully upon the spiritual state of the world, than could be done in the brief summary of events, under the seals, trumpets, and vials. Thus, to the seals, which contain the fate of the outward empire, is annexed the appendix of the elect sealed, which reveals the condition of Christ's spiritual kingdom. To the extinction of the Western empire, under the four first trumpets; and of the Eastern empire under the fifth and sixth trumpets, is joined "the little book," which recapitulates more at length the flight of the true Church to the wilderness; the testimony of the two witnesses; and the rise of the renewed persecuting empire, in its Papal form of the double tyranny, civil and ecclesiastical, of the first and second beast conjoined; and concludes with the resurrection of the witnesses, and the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, from the Reformation downwards. Contemporaneous with the Reformation, is the commencement of the pouring out of the seven vials, in continued succession, by which the Papal, and the other persecuting powers, shall be utterly destroyed. And, connected with these outward events, is the description of the spiritual state of Babylon the Great, and her final fall; when the last vial poured into the air, affects not only the air itself, but the earth also; and, affecting the whole state of society, not only the higher elements, but the lowest depths and inmost springs of existing things; brings about the universal catastrophe, which shall usher in the never-ceasing dominion of the Most High.

Then succeeds the marriage of the Church, "the Bride—the Lamb's Wife," as completely prepared, and arrayed in the latter-day glory—and then, the heavenly state, as far as earthly and sensible images can represent that which "eye hath not seen nor ear heard," nor hath the heart of man rightly conceived.

Time and space prevent us from touching on more than the general structure; a complete work upon prophecy would have to investigate the spiritual state of religion in the time of Constantine, and the periods immediately subsequent, when true believers were nearly lost in the crowd of nominal worshippers; and the truths of the Gospel, seldom strongly held, or clearly displayed, by those who are called "The Fathers," began now to be almost wholly overlaid, by a structure of heterogeneous opinions; piled up, rather over, than upon, the true foundation. In like manner, the wilderness Church, and the two witnesses, would require a special notice; though this has already been well done, in several publications, especially by Mr. Elliott. The first and second beast, with the false prophet, would almost demand a short treatise upon Popery, as a just comment upon the text. It would be necessary, also, to point out strongly, that the death and resurrection of the witnesses have already taken place, at the period of the Reformation; for then the preachers of the Gospel ascended up into the political heaven, and possessed great influence with the higher powers; and becoming eminent dignitaries, they have preached the Gospel, not in sackcloth, but in purple and fine linen, as ecclesiastical princes. We may remark farther, that the Reformation was the period when prophesying in sackcloth became no longer possible; for a certain degree of freedom for preaching, which had existed before the Reformation, even in Catholic countries, was put an end to, after it fairly broke out; and while, in Protestant countries, preachers were encouraged, and sometimes promoted, they who attempted to prophesy in Roman Catholic countries, were immediately silenced, or exterminated, by the Inquisition.

We must, however, chiefly confine our attention to the outward structure of the Revelation—the succession of seals, trumpets, and vials. The seals evidently present emblems, as of war, pestilence, and famine. One or two mistakes we must slightly note regarding these, as they occur in many commentators. They would contract the influence of these seals, trumpets, and vials within certain fixed dates, and limit them, to a

certain determinate series of reigns. We need only mention a series of war emperors—of famine emperors—of pestilence emperors—to point out the impossibility of finding, in the annals of history, facts in support of such a supposition. Neither does the influence of a seal or a trumpet terminate when its successor begins, but here, as in the general tenor of prophecy, the prediction extends through the whole series, though it may have the fulness of its accomplishment at some particular periods.

The first seal is the emblem of victory. "I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer." The time that succeeded John's Revelation was indeed the era of victories—the short period, of the only accession to the Roman Empire, since Augustus fixed the limit of its dominion. Trajan followed close after the Revelation, upon the death of Domitian, in 96, becoming the colleague of Nerva in 97, and sole emperor in 98; and, from 102 to 118, the Roman Empire was bursting athwart its boundaries, and carrying its victorious eagles far beyond the Danube, and the Euphrates. It was the era, not only of secular, but of spiritual victory; the triumphs of the Cross were as extensive, and more permanent than those of Trajan. The second seal is the emblem of war; war without victory. Provinces, already conquered, reconquered, and wasted, as in the wars of Adrian and the revolts of the Jews; and subsequently, the shock of legions against legions, in the internal struggles for empire, which ended in the severe domination of Severus. The third seal is that of famine; "a measure of wheat for a penny"—that is, a man's daily sustenance for a man's daily labour—the chenix being the measure of wheat the labourer would eat; and the penny, or denarius, what the labourer would earn during the day; of course, almost famine to the single labourer, and decided famine to the labourer's family. These famines occurred at intervening years, 155, 163, 164, &c. &c. The fourth seal is that of pestilence; death on the pale horse. Pestilence follows hard upon famine. The famine of 163 and 164, was followed fast, by the pestilence of

168; which, stretching from Ethiopia, overspread the Roman Empire, and was computed, perhaps laxly, to last for fifteen years. In 189, the influence of the pestilence and the famine were both combined, shewing the joint operation of two seals at the same moment; and during the reign of the thirty tyrants, from 253 to 268, the combination of all these miseries occurred. The waste of human life throughout the empire was beyond computation, though, at one time, 5000 were reckoned to die daily at Rome, and half the population of Alexandria were estimated to have perished.

The title of Gibbon's work, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," might, and in some respects does, afford a commentary upon these ominous seals, and destroying causes, which were bringing the heathen Roman Empire to the brink of ruin. But Gibbon has omitted one great cause of the decline of the Roman Empire—slavery. A free population would have been a check upon the tyranny, first of the Senate, and then of the emperors; and would have afforded a force sufficient to have repelled the united attacks of the world. Italy, when full of free states, and independent cities, with its soil fully cultivated by free hands, was estimated to be able to raise seven hundred thousand men; and this, apparently, without much, if any, exaggeration. But the long wars of the Romans wore out the free cultivators, by keeping them so long under arms, and withdrawing them from the culture of their own little fields; when the productive labour of the absent citizen, had to be supplied by the forced and wasteful labour of the captured slave. Waste succeeded to waste; the small proprietor yielded to the greater. Italy was apportioned out into large estates; and small bands of slaves were succeeded by immense gangs, who over-cropped the land without enriching it, as they superseded the labour of cattle, and the re-invigoration of soil by manure. Amid the splendour and luxury of a few, and the ruin of the many, the heavens, in just retribution, seemed, to many of the ancient Romans, to withhold their genial influences, and the earth to be deprived of her ordinary fertility; but Columella pointed out the true cause to

his desponding countrymen ; the heavens and the earth remained the same, but the fate of Rome was determined by that oracular sentence, common in the Roman mouths, "*Latifundia perdidere Italiam*;" immense properties have been the ruin of Italy. It should have been added, immense properties, cultivated by slaves. Slavery entails slavery. The first gangs of slaves died out, worn away by incessant labour ; the masters would not be at the expense of rearing children ; new slaves must be bought, and brought from a distance ; for those purchased near at hand are apt to run away, and to find retreats near their native homes. Therefore, before the hordes of barbarians rushed into the empire, hordes of slaves were dragged from one end of it to the other, and there was a perpetual emigration of slavery and death, to prepare vacant seats for future barbarian conquerors. Hence the sudden close of the first seal of Victory ; for when free men are scarce, soldiers must be scarce too. Hence the seal of wars also, in part ; for mercenaries, that have no country, can only contend for a master. Hence the frequent famines, in land that was scourged by perpetual cropping, without manure, and which could be only left, like the untilled Sabbatic earth of the Jews, inactive, to the influence of the elements, to regain its former fertility. Hence the pestilence ; which pursued the track of the various famines, and wasted the decreasing inhabitants, already perishing away by the famine and the sword.

The fifth seal is that of persecution, and of the martyrs. As we remarked, that other seals continue to operate, long after their time of opening, so, we may remark, that the fifth seal goes back, and includes former periods of persecution also. It is difficult, or impossible, to sum up all the persecutions : they have often been reckoned ten. A number too great, if the general persecutions alone are enumerated ; a number far too low, if the partial and transitory persecutions are reckoned. The persecutions of Nero, of Domitian, of Marcus Aurelius, of Severus, and of Decius, in 249, greatly added to the number of the martyrs ; but, the noted persecution which coincides chiefly

with the time of the opening of this seal, the fierce and exterminating persecution of Diocletian, by which he flattered himself that he had abolished even the name of Christian, and which lasted ten prophetic days, or ten years, from 303 to 313, fully accomplished the import of the fifth seal. And there was but "a little season" till the sixth seal was opened, all over the Roman world; and Constantine, first partially, and then by becoming sole emperor, in 323, put an end to the heathen form of the empire.

"And, lo! there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind; and the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

This passage is quoted at length, for it contains a considerable difficulty; and when that difficulty is solved, a great and general principle. The expressions are evidently too vast and lofty to be confined to the nominal change which took place under Constantine. Many, perceiving this, have remarked that these expressions apply not to the time of Constantine, but to the end of the world; and, proceeding upon this mistake, they have deranged the whole structure of the prophecy; ending at these verses, and recommencing again, and attempting to synchronize that which was successive, till the whole Apocalyptic edifice has seemed one Babel of confusion. The double fulfilment of prophecy solves every difficulty, and reconciles opposing opinions. The nominal change of the Roman Empire to Christianity, under Constantine, is taken as the type of the universal change of the

world to real Christianity, at the commencement of the millenium. And the scenery, too gorgeous for the first events, must be interpreted, also, with a view to the latter, when the whole prophecy will receive accomplishment in the utmost latitude, of the fullest sense, that can be attached to it.

The heathen emperors, who prevented the rise of Antichrist, being taken away, the Pseudo-Christian emperors, exercising an ecclesiastical as well as political domination, form the first transition to Popery; and were aiding, at once, in corrupting the doctrines, and limiting the few small remaining liberties of the Christian Church. If Antichrist was not yet fully formed, the seeds of the Antichristian heresy were plenteously sown, and were already affording the promise of an abundant harvest. The empire was changed in name, but not in nature; and was equally inimical at heart to true religion, as the old Pagan tyranny, which had passed away. It was but another, though disguised form of that secular empire, which had so long stood in opposition to the people of God. It also was to be destroyed. The seventh seal was opened, which contained the six trumpets predictive of its doom.

“And the angel took the censor, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it upon the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.” The great earthquake, which the then Roman world considered as predictive of its doom, happened in 365. “And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded, and then followed hail,” &c. The first blast of the northern hail-storm occurred in 375, ten years after the earthquake; when the Goths, so long checked by the warlike emperors who had arrested their course, re-crossed the Danube, again to be partially checked and appeased by Theodosius. But his death, in 395, once more opened a free passage to the deluge of barbarians; and the northern hail-storm raged from 396 to 476, till the Western empire was totally laid waste. We mark this the more particularly, as commentators, in general, restrict within too narrow limits of time, the influence of the

seals, trumpets, and vials. The northern hail-storm lasted a hundred years, with a lull of fifteen years; or eighty years, if we consider its last uninterrupted intensity; and it was going on, and proceeding in its course, while other trumpets were sounding in succession, and conjoining their influence with its own. In like manner, the battle of Armageddon might last for a hundred years, at least for a period much beyond what interpreters generally imagine.

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea." That is, the Roman Empire, assailed by enemies from without, and at the same time torn asunder with inward convulsion, was rapidly descending into that sea of mingled peoples, from which the empires of prophecy had arisen. "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven," &c., "and the name of the star is called Wormwood." Here, the interpreter of prophecy, and the historian of the fall of the Empire, have a triple task to perform: first, to describe the progress of the Northern Invasion; secondly, to explain the political corruption of the Empire; thirdly, to develop the corruption of religion; and, in consequence of this last, the corruption of morals, which so greatly hastened the final catastrophe. "And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars." In other words, the Western Empire was extinguished.

It may here be right to remark, that the numbers of Revelation are prophetic, round, and approximate numbers; not real, and what happens with real numbers, fractional. The enumeration proceeds by thirds of the Empire; but more than a third was extinguished when the Western Empire ceased to exist. Antichrist was to last three prophetic years and a half, or 1260 years; but these also must be considered as approximate years. And, an approximate calculation seems most appropriate to the figurative language of prophecy, and best adapted when applied to empires, whether temporal or spiritual, of which neither the rise, nor the extinction are confined to a single moment of time.

As they ascend by stages to greatness, so they descend by falling from one Tarpeian rock to another, but their fall is seldom immediately fatal.

The explanation of prophecy, on a large scale, must be connected with the philosophy of history, in order to throw full light upon both. A most delightful part of history, to a devout mind, are the vestiges which it contains of God's Providence over human affairs; and the observation of these, is the most neglected by common historians; who dwell upon the under agents, often, with a fanciful minuteness, but neglect the great agent of all, who sets the springs of the universe in motion. The building of Constantinople by Constantine, would attract the attention of those, who seek to behold God, both in prophecy and in history. It was taking a branch from a diseased tree, and ingrafting it upon a healthier stem; it prolonged the duration of a portion of the Roman Empire, for a thousand years; it formed a bridge over the dark ages, and connected the civilisation of Classic times, with the advancement of modern society. The fortifications of Constantinople, too strong to be stormed by such enemies as existed in those ages, afforded a retreat, which could not be starved out, unless by a concurrence of circumstances, which only occurred late, in the growth of the Turkish power;—the besiegers possessing completely both shores of the Bosphorus. Constantinople, then, remained safe from the northern hailstorm, but was exposed to the assaults of the fanaticism of a new religion, acting on two different pastoral races, the Arabian and the Turcoman.

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit.” The first thoughts of Mahomet appeared to be to restore the worship of the unity of God, and to set aside vain idols. He might have been the teacher of his nation, unhappily he aspired to be their prophet. How slight seemed that first shade that came over the mind of the gifted Arabian, but it was a smoke from the bottomless pit, and that little smoke became a mighty

mist, by which "the sun and the air were darkened."—And, that eclipse, after so many years, still intercepts, over so large a portion of the earth, the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

The Arabian locusts, were to prevail for 150 years; a reckoning which is easily made out, on the principle of prophetic approximations, but, where the difficulty is considerable, if we sought for an exact enumeration. The Mahometan era is 622: ten years later, 632, the Saracens enter Syria. Between 710 and 718 the Kalifat had reached its immense greatness; and, a hundred years after the commencement of foreign aggression, in Syria, the Arabians received their first great check at Tours, in 732. About the middle of the eighth century, the Abasside Caliphs rent their empire in twain, from their successes in the east, and their inability to establish themselves in the west. The building of Bagdad, the City of Peace, in 762, is supposed, like the boundaries assigned to Rome in the reign of Augustus, to mark the extreme limits of the Saracen Empire. But the victories of Haroun Alraschid, like those of Trajan, revived the spirit of conquest for a short season; and, in 846, the city of Rome itself was in danger. About this period the Turkish guards became unruly, from 841 to 870, and their frequent revolts, like those of the barbarians in the Roman pay, foretold that empire was again passing to the barbarians of the north.

"The sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice saying," &c., "loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." In 1063 the Turcomans passed the Euphrates, but the great body of the nation were not destined to subdue Constantinople; that was left for a small branch of them—the Othmans—which drew recruits from all parts, from the Christians as well as the Moslem. On the 27th of July, 1299, occurred the first attack of the Othmans; on the 29th of May, 1453, Constantinople was taken. About the middle of the sixteenth century the Othman Empire was at its height, towards the death of Solyman, or some years before it. There is more than usual exactness in

the computation of "an hour, a day, a month, and a year," and it appears to be nearly, if not precisely, the interval, between the crossing of the Euphrates, and the taking of Constantinople.

In regard to the vials, this difficulty exists, that the series is not yet completely fulfilled.—But, if one term of the series be known, then there is a mean of, in some degree, defining the rest. "The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Most interpreters, and apparently justly, explain this of the Turkish and other Moslem empires, in accordance with the sense, in which the Euphrates had been previously named. Others apply it to the drying up of the resources of Popery—as of the mystical Babylon, seated upon the mystical Euphrates. Both interpretations would equally serve our purpose. Popery and Mahometanism, though antagonist powers, have coeval judgments, and synchronize in their rise and termination. When did the Euphrates of the east begin to dry up?—the Turks themselves would answer, in their own phrase, "when the Russians became Germans"—and thus added to their powers, already formidable, the discipline of European armies. This was during the reign of the Empress Catherine II., at the same time when the resources of the mystical Babylon were drying up, from the prevalence of infidelity. Having, as we consider, a fixed point here, we may determine the other numbers of the series accordingly.

The first vial occasioned "a noisome and grievous sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast." This ought to be sought for contemporaneously with the Reformation, which had previously been spoken of, in the resurrection of the witnesses, and the publication of the Everlasting Gospel. And a commentator has only to draw a faithful picture of the immorality which prevailed among those who had the mark of the beast, at that time, and which threatened the dissolution of society, to give an ample illustration of the text. The Roman Catholics, themselves, acknowledge, that the reaction of the Reformation upon

Catholicism, was almost necessary to its continuance—so much did it owe to the new life which it gained in opposing Luther.

“The second angel poured out his vial on the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man.” The religious wars everywhere, and the extermination of Protestants, wherever Protestantism in Roman Catholic countries was finally crushed, it is believed, would give an easy, and sufficient comment to the effects of this vial.

The third vial may present more difficulty; it affected not the sea, or the multitude of nations, but the springs from which nations are derived—shall we say families?—and it affected those who had been the authors of the former bloodshed: “they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy.” The Inquisition which was first a religious, became in its progress, a political engine. It first crushed religious, and after that, civil liberty. Could its records be laid open, it might be seen how many of those who were the persecutors of religious liberty, became the victims of political tyranny. At all events, that instrument which crushed a public cause, entered afterwards into private families, and inflicted its vengeance on a very different class of persons, from those with which it had at first commenced.

“And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.” The liberties of Europe had been gradually wasting away, under the immorality denoted by the first vial; the religious wars signified by the second, (in which to take France for an example, the independence of the most spirited part of the French nation, the Huguenot gentry, had been nearly extinguished;) and lastly, by the crushing of all freedom of opinion, even in the bosoms of private families, by the researches of religious tyranny; when the showy military despotism arose, first, of Louis the Fourteenth in France, and then, in opposition to him, the increase of standing armies took place all over Europe. “And men were scorched with great heat,” though they professed to admire the increased splendour of the political luminaries, thus shining fiercely

over their heads. It was a time of prosperity for tyranny, and for superstition; men were scorched and blasphemed, yet they fell down and worshipped. But a time of reaction was speedily at hand. Before Louis the Fourteenth was buried, he was insulted; and the superstition he had supported, was undermined by a strong reaction towards infidelity.

“And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness.” When the strong arm of power was removed, so violent was the flood of incredulity which first burst out in France, and thence spread over Europe, that the Roman superstition was altogether unprepared to make head against it. They had neither orators, nor writers, to withstand the sarcasms of Voltaire, or the eloquence of Rousseau. The press seemed entirely in the hands of infidels; and crowned heads, infidels themselves, along with their ministers, seemed chiefly to be speculating how they could best appropriate the spoils of that Church, which had lost the support of public opinion. Then the sixth angel poured out his vial, on the great river Euphrates; and, while the resources of the Catholic Church were drying up, both in the secularization of its possessions, by the princes, and in the failing credulity of the multitude, Russia was openly disclosing her plans for seizing upon Constantinople, with the full resources for doing so; had she not been prevented, down to this day, solely by the interference of other Christian powers.

“Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth,” &c. “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done.’ And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings, and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.” The Mahometans speak of the false dawn as preceding the true—it is often the case in the affairs of the world. “Blessed is he that watcheth.” The French began to dream of a political millenium, and that fool’s paradise, accompanied with thunders, and

lightnings, and a great earthquake, will introduce the true millennium, at last. The kings and the nations are gathered together, not for victory, but for slaughter—and the fowls of heaven are gathering likewise, but with a more unerring instinct. The earthquake was the greatest since men had been upon the earth; at no time had society been so deeply stirred from its lowest foundations. It was truly a day of solemn judgment, "*illa suprema dies*," as one of its victims said, when led to execution. The sacrifice never ceased, and the blood ran in perpetual torrents. It was indeed the era of retribution; not only kings and great men, but every bond man, and every free, both sexes, and all ages, were sacrificed to the Moloch of pretended liberty. The rulers of to-day were the victims of to-morrow, and society would have crumbled down, without leaving any fragments to rebuild the social edifice, had not the earthquake been stayed for a season, and a truce been imposed upon the contending nations. But the earthquake is still heaving deep underground, and preparing a yet wider desolation. Men are plastering over the rents of the social edifice, but the foundations themselves are falling into the gulf below, which is yawning to receive them. There is a pause in the prophecy, between the commencement, and the end of the battle, where the attention is directed to Babylon, and its final ruin; and then again the strife recommences, and nothing remains throughout the desolate prospect, but the corpses of the slain.

But, while the nations that oppose the reign of the Messiah are thus destroyed, by a rod of iron; the Church of Christ is flourishing beneath the golden sceptre of her King. While a wail is arising from the kindreds of the earth, the voice of praise and rejoicing is heard in the tabernacles of the righteous. The little flock has already become a great multitude: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

It might seem remarkable, at first view, that so short a space is assigned to the millennium, in the Apocalypse; but, due consideration will abate any surprise that might be felt. The millennium is, as we have remarked before, the result of universal prayer; and the accomplishment of all the prophecies and promises of God. All the prophets beforehand had spoken of the sufferings of Christ, and more largely, of the glory that should follow. It was the office of John, to point out more minutely, the interval which should take place, before the suffering Church should become the Church triumphant. When the last struggle is over, and the voice from heaven pronounced, "it is finished," John's chief task was finished also.

We need only notice one great oversight with respect to the duration of the millennium: it seems generally supposed that it is only to last for a literal thousand years; but all the other years spoken of in the Apocalypse are prophetic years, and the scale of prophecy, as well as the general harmony of revelation, requires, that these should be understood as prophetic years also.

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, till he comes, whose right it is"—which implies, that previous empires should be transient, and that of the Saviour enduring. The reverse would be the case were the thousand years to be understood literally—the empire of the Saviour would be less durable than the tyranny of Antichrist, which was to last for three prophetic years and a half. But the world is yet in its infancy, as all Scripture, as well as all nature and science, declares. God has "visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him," but long ages remain when he will "shew mercy to the thousands of generations of those that love him, and keep his commandments."

The millennium, whatever be its length, must come to an end. Men will again become careless; the Spirit be withdrawn; and Satan again loosed from his chain. The post-millennial Gog and Magog, we have not space to dwell on; it is evidently one of the concluding instances of the double accomplishment of

prophecy. The literal Gog and Magog are to perish literally, upon the mountains of Israel, previous to the commencement of the millennium; and at its close a figurative Gog and Magog shall be spiritually raised up for a second fulfilment of the prophecy, and they also shall perish for ever. Then shall be the last and general judgment, when Death and Hades shall deliver up the dead that are in them, and the saints shall enter into their everlasting rest.

We have observed of the Revelation, before, that its march is onwards, and its progress continuous, though it encloses frequent appendices which, in a modern work, would probably be placed at the end, in the form of notes. At the 21st chapter, some eminent commentators have supposed, that the Apocalypse returned upon its steps, and that the discourse respecting the millennium is resumed. But the apostle says expressly, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." No more exists an apocalyptic sea of nations, which had continued through the millennium, and out of which the second Gog and Magog were to arise. Men enter heaven individually, and not nationally; for nations end, with the passing away of the first heaven and earth. The origin of the mistake can be pointed out; John beholds the new heaven and the new earth, but it is in vision, and in continuation of the preceding visions; all of which were imaged out in earthly scenery, and represented in visible emblems. Thus only could the glories of the heavenly hereafter, be shadowed out to the mind of man, in its present state; and it is by considering the nature of this vision, that any apparent difficulties will be easily explained. What is remarkable here, is, that there is no temple, and no sun. The mediatorial service is accomplished. Each believer is a temple and a sun, were any created glory or sanctuary to be sought for; but there needs not that, for God himself is the sanctuary, and the Sun of Righteousness is shedding his everlasting radiance.

Divine providence moves in cycles of ascending accomplish-

ment; the whole scheme of the Bible is represented here as a complete period. It begins in Paradise, and it ends in Paradise. Man is deprived of the tree of life; and the tree of life is here fully restored. It is the Palingenesia of Job upon an immense scale; not only has the former prosperity returned, but it is more than doubled; it is augmented to an infinite degree, and in a higher sphere, as much as the heavens are higher than the earth. The preparations of eternity are completed, and the infinite love of God is manifested for ever.

There remain two practical applications to make; we are to regard the signs of the times; and the point which we have reached, in the time of prophecy. Evidently, we are not far from the millennium; there is scarcely anything new to take place betwixt us and that blessed period, except the extinction of Popery, and the fearful fall of the northern hail-storm, (where "every stone was about the weight of a talent,") previous to the entrance of the seventy-five preparatory years of Daniel, and then "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." What if Popery is already fallen?—it is no longer, at least, a political power. We must distinguish between its civil and its ecclesiastical dominion; the last, it is to be expected, will survive the former, and will only be thoroughly rooted out during the seventy-five predicted years. But the little horn is "frayed" and broken. A dead palsy has seized the Papal King; his head hangs from side to side, and he must be propped up by cushions, to retain even his tottering sceptre, in his feeble grasp.

The northern hail-storm yet awaits us; but there can be no doubt of the quarter from whence it comes. Russia occupies the whole North. The clouds from whence the iron shower is to proceed, wait but the word of command. The artillery and the battalions of Russia are ready to march at a moment's notice; and even now, they impend with their black masses over the whole line of their immense frontier. It is the contest between democracy and despotism, between superstition and in-

fidelity, and both are ready for the death-struggle. Both will find allies in the enemies' ranks, and the warfare will be as confused and intermingled, as it is extended. But Russia also must perish, as the rising and double Antichrist of the East, with her emperor and Pope blended in one. After overwhelming, it may be, for a time, the democratic nations, she also must receive the poison into her own veins, and will catch the devouring flames herself, while endeavouring to extinguish the conflagration of Europe.

But what are the signs with regard to the fate of Britain? England was once part of the Roman Empire; and, wo after wo impends upon the ancient dominions of the Cæsars. England revolted from the Papacy, and thus seemed to cut off the entail of curses. Those that separate themselves from Rome, separate themselves from her plagues, even at the last hour. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." But how many of the English clergy and nobility, with an infatuation that belongs only to those who are foredoomed of God, choose the very moment, when the vials of wrath are about to be poured out to the uttermost, and seek to re-enter Rome by the back-door of Puseyism! Like the maddened Jews, at the destruction of Jerusalem, at the very moment when final vengeance impended, crowding within the walls of the devoted city.

And then, there are not only the judgments of Babylon, but the judgments also of the nations. A time of universal retribution seems approaching, when the wine-cup of God's fury must pass from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom. There is an awful gloom, but there is hope also, and both fear and hope should animate us to unceasing prayer. We are on the verge of the millennium. Let us then cherish the spirit of millennial prayer. All great things proceed from small beginnings. The dawn of the millennial day will strike some eminences before its light will visit the nations generally. Happy are they who watch for that dawning, and whose spirits are already prepared

by the Spirit of God, to welcome that amazing and blissful revolution.

Jesus is continually saying, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me." As he comes to meet his disciples, so it befits his disciples to hasten forward, and to meet him, flocking to his side as did the apostles, when the storm threatened to shipwreck the vessel. He will either say peace to the tempest, or peace to our hearts. In either case, we shall do well.

But there are precious comings, as we have observed before, previous to the Saviour's manifesting his power to the astonished and awe-stricken nations. "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." An awful futurity was fast approaching, for the Jewish nation, at the time these words were addressed to them; but what serene opportunities of Gospel grace, what fertilizing dews from on high, visited the elect of Israel, before the final ruin of the nation! Let us hope and pray for our country, and seek for times of refreshing, while yet it is called to-day. But, if the gloom still gathers darker and darker around us, let us not be utterly disheartened; if we lose one country, as Christians, we have, still, another and a better country; and a kingdom which cannot be shaken, amidst all those earthquakes which threaten to shake the present frame of society to pieces. Towards the close of the Revelation, we have the right temper of spirit inculcated, in which all prophecy should be read, and all accomplishments of prophecy contemplated. "The Spirit and the Bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The people of God seem at this moment to resemble Homer's picture of the almost fainting and expiring warrior; his friends bear him to a gentle eminence; the rising north wind plays over his pallid features, and his eyes open again to light and life. Oh! that the Spirit of God would breathe anew upon us: Oh!

that the Spirit would say "come," in those thrilling accents that reach the soul! Then the reviving bride, though in feeble accents, it may be, at first, will say "come," also; and the invitation will be received and re-echoed, till the Saviour himself comes suddenly into the midst of his disciples; and their hearts shall acknowledge his presence, and their lips be filled with his praise.

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